

SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT FOR A DIVERSE
MULTICULTURAL BLACK
CONGREGATION

Johnny R. Johnson, D.Min.

A.A., Collegiate Business Institute, 1965
B.F.A., New York Institute of Technology, 1975
M.Div., Wesley Theology Seminary, 1981

Mentor
Lewis Baldwin, Ph.D.
Victor Anderson, Ph.D.

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by

Johnny R. Johnson

United Theological Seminary, 2003

Mentor

Lewis Baldwin
Victor Anderson

Date: _____

Approved:

Mentor(s)

Dean, Doctoral Studies

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this project was to create and implement a model of ministry that would identify and capitalize on the individual and communal strengths of the multicultural congregation. Using qualitative methodology, this action research incorporated seminars, workshops and surveys over a period of approximately one year. At the end of the research, it was found that in order for the congregation to become spiritually empowered, it must first develop a sense of pluralism from which can evolve a self-perpetuating paradigm for both spiritual and economic empowerment.

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My deepest gratitude to all the persons who supported and assisted my efforts in this project, it has been a labor of love. To my Mentors you have been a constant source of encouragement and direction. The open and candid reflections of my colleagues in the Black Church Economic and Spiritual Empowerment have allowed my creative thoughts to be shaped and reshaped as this project has unfolded.

To my two professional associates Dr. Michelle White and Dr. Clyde A. Anderson and to my editors Ms. Claudine Morgan and Dr. Susan Newman, your tireless critiques and reflections gave form to this project and new life to the congregation. To the members of the congregation, thank you for your patience and encouragement for the past three years. I will forever be indebted to my context associates.

The following persons require special thanks: Ms. Beverly Farmer, my secretary, who typed and retyped this paper; Mrs. Nona Grady and Ms. Joy Kiernan for their help with editing; my wife Sonja, my mother-in-law Mrs. Adelaide Hunt, and my daughters Jeanine, Jonelle, and Carlotta who kept everything going at home while I was deeply involved in researching and studying. My deep gratitude is also extended to Mr. Larry Bird and countless other persons who led workshops and seminars, so that this project could become the vision of the congregation.

I THANK ALL OF YOU

INTRODUCTION

This project “*Spiritual Empowerment for a Diverse Multicultural Black Congregation*” emerges from years of pastoral leadership in multicultural congregations, attending workshops, and simply trying to develop styles of leadership and methodology for diverse congregations and communities. The present structure of worship in the United Methodist Church, whether actual or as the community perceives it, does not sufficiently acknowledge the cultural and linguistic dynamics of multicultural Black congregations. The context of the project is Westchester United Methodist Church in Bronx, New York. The congregation consists of people from Africa, the Caribbean Islands and other areas around the globe. The purpose of this project was to design a model of ministry that serves as a transforming and validating resource for unifying a multicultural congregation. The long-term goal is for cultural advocacy to become a vehicle for spiritual, as well as economic, empowerment throughout the community. The short-term goal was to understand and celebrate our diversity.

In our “civilized” society, we use words to communicate with one another, but often we fail to see, hear, or feel the messages that are nonverbal. The accepted societal communication is not inclusive if it does not acknowledge the universal behavior of the people. The idea of “normalcy” cannot be based upon the spoken word alone. The clothes that are worn, the hand movements, the facial expressions, and even of walking

are communicative expressions that send messages to those who share a culture. We are distinguished and united by differences and similarities according to gender, age, language, culture, race, sexual identity, and socio economic status. These demographics are just a few diversity challenges to our intellect and emotions as we seek spiritual growth.

Globalization and Cultural Diversity

Indeed, in a world where globalization is becoming increasingly important, culture plays an instrumental part in defining identities. This same culture fosters solidarity, expresses constructive dissent, and finds ways to manage institutional and social change. It is also instrumental in providing a perspective from which we can truly engage in positive interaction both within our respective societies and with the rest of the world. This has become more so in recent times, for the trend towards globalization has, in the cultural sphere, created both opportunities and concerns.

On the other hand, technological improvements in telecommunications, media, and computers have contributed immensely to pushing back the frontiers of ignorance and prejudice favoring the free flow of ideas and information as well as cross-cultural understanding. On the other hand, behind the sheer weight of these substantial advances lurks the danger of what could be called cultural linguistic homogenization. In other words, as we come to rely increasingly on similar tools for cultural expression and for learning about the world, we risk ending up with the false security of a single world view representative of no one's experience in particular.

This type of uniformity can be dangerous in the long run because the essential role culture plays, when rooted in human experience, aids in articulating experiences, opinions, dissents, and worldviews. Without this means of expression, notably in the media, the very fabric of pluralistic democracy may be jeopardized as the conditions for extremism and exclusion can be created. While so much of our progress as societies is built upon the values that we genuinely share, it is often the differing perspectives that have made such progress possible. In that respect, I strongly feel that the principle of cultural diversity, and the values of tolerance of openness, of constructive dialogue, and freedom of expression, provides a necessary complement to globalization if we want the latter to proceed in a sensible and humane way.

Cultural and linguistic diversity is key to bridging the gap between the different sectors in our society. It is necessary to create some type of regulatory instrument that may ultimately develop into an action plan. The action plan could be summarized thusly:

1. A contextual instrument on the diversity of cultural expression and endowed with enforcement powers and dispute settlement mechanisms.
2. This instrument could become a part of the mission of the church, but could also function independently, depending on the feasibility and efficiency of each plan.
3. This instrument would seek to, as its primary objective, to preserve and promote the distinctiveness of individual cultures and by extension, cultural diversity.

4. The preservation of cultural diversity is a vital component in the promotion and preservation of dynamic public sphere, and of pluralistic democratic values and institutions as a whole.
5. This instrument would enshrine, regulate, and therefore legitimize the right of persons to become immersed in changing the cultural diversity ethos.
6. As only a small population for of non-profit organizations have committed themselves to the liberation of their cultural sectors, the instrument would provide the necessary guidelines and boundaries to the community fractions, and thus help preserve the distinctive character and unique contribution of cultural goods and services. In this respect, an international instrument on cultural diversity would break the commerce and cultural dichotomy, and provide a working mechanism to regulate the balance between the two.

These challenges, which underscore the delicate relationship between culture and globalization, must be met in a sensible fashion. In that respect, the creation of an instrument designed to promote cultural and linguistic diversity would both favor the recognition of the fundamental distinct character of cultural concerns and provide a framework to establish clear and mutually agreed upon rules of the game for all parties concerned.

Thus we shall be able to strengthen the core of common “human” values that we all share. In short preserving the capacity of each individual and each individual

culture will strengthen our common humanity. By doing so, we will allow cultures to blossom in their own original way through human experience.

CHAPTER ONE

FOCUS OF MINISTRY PROJECT

The landscapes of our communities are changing but are the structures and systems to address the shifts ready to make the adaptation? The Census Bureau is telling us that immigrants to the United States are flooding the shores, both legally and illegally, and that this will continue for decades. This influx of immigrants is important to keep in mind as we view this polycultural congregation. The ability to adapt to this influx may be the greatest challenge the church will face in the next four to five decades. The Census Bureau reports the following:

The population will reach 275 million in the year 2000 and 383 million in 2050. That amounts to an increase of 50 percent in six decades.

Cultural, governmental familial, and religious ideas and ideas are altering the earlier pervasive corpus of Christian teachings. The Census Bureau now estimates that 200,000 undocumented immigrants will arrive each year for 60 years. Legal and illegal immigrants combined will increase the population by an average of 880,000 a year for the next six decades. The annual increase could be as high as 1.4 million.

Various groups have grown within the population as follows: Black—13.2 percent; Native American—37.9 percent; Asia-Pacific Islanders (including Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian)—107.8 percent; Hispanic (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and others)—53 percent.

These changes in racial mix are not cited to decry or to evaluate them as either good or bad. They are simply statistical ways of reminding us that our field of evangelism has changed and will continue to change in the foreseeable future. These people respond

to the gospel and to Christ and the church best early on after entering their new society.¹

This following statement of purpose has guided the thinking, ministries and programs of Westchester United Methodist Church for more than a decade and any effort to change it has been met with strong opposition. Looking at the words and actions of the people, this statement has become a myth that is interwoven into a culture that neither church nor community consider relevant.

We are people striving to become a loving body united under God for the purpose of worship, Christian Fellowship, care by embracing and nurturing outreach for the attainment and practice of Christian Beliefs, Spiritual Growth and bringing people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.²

It does not reflect with clarity the cultural diversity of the community.

Culture refers to shared values and concepts among people who most often speak the same language and live in proximity to each other. These values and concepts are transmitted for generations, and they provide guidance for everyday behaviors.³

When one defines culture in a statement of purpose it must be clearly stated or inferred that culture is an intrinsic pattern of human behavior, which includes the very thoughts, communications, action, beliefs, values, and institutions, of an ethnic, religious or social group, and the intent of in this case, (the church), establish this as their covenant.

Westchester United Methodist Church has been a part of this community since April 1770 noted in the diary of Joseph Pilmoor, who preached at Newton, Harlem, West Chester and elsewhere in the province of New York. Again on June 22, 1770, he went “in

¹Tom Nees, *The Changing Face of the Church: From American to Global* (Kansas City, MI: Hill Press, March 1997), 120.

² The statement of purpose the church adopted in early 1991.

³ Richard Brislin, *Understanding Culture's Influence, on Behavior, Second Edition* (Orlando, FL, Harcourt College Publisher, 2000), 4.

compliance without a pressing invitation to preach at West Chester.” On this trip he rode by horseback on a “calm and pleasant morning” through “the fields adorned with grass and flowers and the valleys thick with corn”. Reverend Pilmoor was entertained by the Bartow family, and he preached in the “Court House and found great liberty.” Pilmoor preached at West Chester again on July 15, 1771, as he wrote, “To a small but genteel congregation,” from the text, “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.” Laymen in the villages kept the fires of religious worship burning. Ministers traveling continuously would visit as many little societies as possible. Fortunate indeed were the towns located close together. They could expect more frequent visits of the circuit riders.⁴

Westchester United Methodist Church is a small church with a membership of about three hundred ninety members in a community that hosts small businesses. The community around the church was once the home of Italians, Eastern Europeans, and German descendants. The centerpiece of the community was a housing complex built during the 1950’s that was inhabited predominantly by European Americans. This housing complex is now the home of African Americans, individuals from the Caribbean, West Africans (Ghanaians, Liberians, Nigerians), Haitians, Panamanians, Latinos and people from Sierra Leone. The housing complex has remained a lower to middle-income development. This distinct community is located a quarter of a mile from the church. The more immediate community that surrounds the church is still home to the offspring of the original congregation.

It has been difficult to determine the income levels of the members of the church. There is an unwillingness to divulge personal financial information and this unwillingness

⁴ Westchester United Methodist Church History.

extends even to disclosing educational and employment information. Edward T. Hill states: “Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants.”⁵ Malinsky is cited as defining culture as:

[T]he “artificial, secondary environment” which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values.⁶

The median age of the members is about forty years. Many of the senior members have been in the church throughout the tenures of several pastorates. The young people, who could represent the vibrancy and growth potential of the church, are not inclined to become involved in the programs of the church. They might be willing to participate more fully in the life of the church but this group represents what could be called a “confused generation.” They live in two worlds. When at home, they are under the cultures and traditions of their parents. When at school, they live in the styles and comfort of American youth.

Worship practices of this particular congregation are entrenched in cultural traditions. Language and traditional customs play a major role in how the congregation views the economical, political, social, educational, and spiritual life of the church and community. It should be noted that, although there are a few murmurs, the congregation as a whole is quite pleased with its diversity and struggles to maintain that identity. However, there is a thread of territorial bickering when planning programs and electing leadership.

⁵ Edward T Hill, *The Silent Language* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), 53.

⁶ H. Richard Niebur, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1951), 32.

The first and second-generation immigrants have brought about the growth and membership of this church and community. As we confront the cultural dynamism, the church and community must improve the technique and effort in training our leadership. The leadership must take on a worldview if they are to meet and lead the new congregants, for in each culture there are some unique characteristics.

One cultural distinction is the maleness in West African culture. The socio-political structure of African societies, both ancient and current, indicates that all activities of authority outside of the house are the responsibility of the man. Traditional African culture positions the chief/father/male as the leader of the family, clan as the decision maker for the group. The American perspective is dramatically opposed to this perspective. Through interviews, it was discovered that the church where African males are uninvolved but where African women are an obvious presence faces a considerable challenge. The women and wives of African men are invested in a culture that disallows their participation in certain ways while their new culture and pastor encourage them to become involved. These women face a powerful personal conflict. Many of the African members of Westchester are first generation émigrés and have not embraced American culture to the extent that they have embraced the American promise of economic betterment. These women are subject to their husbands and are limited by a native culture that is in many ways, wholly inconsistent with the American/European culture of Westchester.

For the Caribbean there is a distinct variance to the African culture and tradition in that the women are the major participants without the active role of men. However, in both the second generations find it much easier to assimilate and acculturate into the American culture, which creates conflict if there is no strong family presence in the home. In view of these factors, and many others it is important that the Westchester United

Methodist Church congregation accept the challenge in order for it to grow and be true to its mission and the relationship to the community.

The church must not just speak of the chronic conditions of our society; it must be active to eradicate them, and the systems that created such conditions in the first place. It must be clear there are ways and means to accomplish this task. Because of the diversity of the world we need to sustain the culture of the people, otherwise they will lose their identity. The aim is to co-exist in a cooperative relationship to grow in the areas of economic and spiritual empowerment. It has been my experience after nearly some twenty years of Ministry, and being appointed, with the exception of three years, in similar settings, that there is a common thread that has suffocated the spirit of understanding and emancipation found in Luke(4: 18-19), which addresses the depressive mind set of a people that had just gone along with the status quo. Jesus said:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim
liberty to captives and to the blind, to set the downtrodden free, to
proclaim the Lord's year of favor.⁷

Enlightenment through transformation must be established by means of a careful and systematic curriculum that will not threaten the fragile lines of communication that exist by a thread. Dr. Samuel D. Procter stated that Jesus addressed this view of diversity:

He made it our burden to be mindful of the poor, the weak, and the marginal people of the world. Jesus defied the norm that stood in awe of the rich, the mighty, and the powerful, blessing the poor, the meek, and the pure in heart. Thus the Christian pastor approaches the issue of diversity looking for those in the mix who have become marginalized, who had a slower beginning and who need to catch up. The pastor knew about colonialism, slavery, sexism, racism, and class, and about generational and pandemic poverty. In the midst of the diversity, the mind of Christ tells him or her to look for the

⁷ Hebrew-Greek Key word Study Bible.

least, the lost, and the left behind. All around us we hear rhetoric defending the status quo, defending the advantages and privileges already secured by those who are ahead. The Christian pastor, as a child of the culture, may be seduced into honoring such self-serving behavior. However, we are called to follow Jesus and to bring the light of the gospel to bear upon issue of diversity, liberation, and inclusiveness. It is one thing to know the “is-ness” of things, and even better to know the “ought-ness;” but then come the “therefore” of things, where go and how can we get started.⁸

The intention is to scale away the superficial and mundane walls of language that divide and to cultivate that which enriches and empowers the people. Given the multicultural diversity, history, and social setting of this congregation, the lack of exposure to the crises that afflict the African-American society and church that they are now a part of, members have no opportunity to affirm their own culture but only to express it in their home or group setting. This creates internal exclusion and external confusion among second and third generations. The challenge is to mobilize the church and community into an open mindedness by challenging them to take whatever steps necessary to empower the church and community towards a centric proclamation of the Gospel in this community. When this is done many of the social, educational, economic and spiritual problems will be addressed and embraced with Christian attitudes.

However, one dare not think this will encompass the full scope of economic and spiritual empowerment, but will surely provide the door for other ideas and possibilities to take root. It should be understood that the church with all of its frailties must embrace the entire community. It is the church, particularly the Black Church that is the outgrowth of humiliation, racism and total frustration inflicted upon the community long before 1787.

⁸ Samuel D. Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor, *We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor's Vocation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press), 115, 116.

Olin P. Moyd states that the Black Church: “. . . is a psychic, spiritual unity which is a outgrowth of black folks cultural development in a segregated social system.”⁹

It is important that culturally, people understand that psychic spiritual unity is a feeling one gets from God when attending and participating in worship. This oneness must transcend from one individual to another, from one culture to another, regardless of cultural economic status.

As a youngster in Downtown Chicago, I had to learn to check things out. For example, before going into a restaurant, I used to make sure that Hispanics or Black people were accepted there. I could not be sure that I would be welcome. Today, I still go through these “psychological somersaults” as I wonder at times whether I will be welcome in certain places. I wish that I didn’t still carry this burden of insecurity. I wish that I were confident enough to just be myself and embrace and accept others. My own insecurities may cause me at times to misinterpret the meanings behind some of the looks that I get from others. My insecurities come from rejection, which sometimes cause me to reject myself even before people reject me! One of the worst things about racism, stereotyping, and the belittling of one group by another is that the victims often flee when no one is chasing them. Although I am on my way to doing away with that practice in myself, I am not there yet. But I feel that speaking out will help me come out of my own closet of insecurities and will help others too.¹⁰

At one time in this community the issues were visibly apparent and were reflected in the social fabric of the lifestyle of its people. This no longer holds true and is in some ways not even relevant. Now the local issues and concerns take on the complexities of an “intra” and inter cultural nature that reach beyond the shores of the immediate community. However, the cultural and traditional response to crisis resembles that of their native land.

⁹ Olin P. Moyd, *Redemption in Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 189.

¹⁰ Samuel Bentances, “Interview Educator’s Response to Cultural Diversity” <http://www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/betances>. Accessed March 1, 2003.

The greatest challenge is to find a common thread that would transcend the individual and weave itself into a tapestry of different people from different places praising God together, and at the same time working to create a common working relationship. Multiculturalism will remain a stumbling block of divisiveness as long as the membership is only a Sunday exercise that has no visible relevance Monday thru Saturday. No contact during the week on issues that affect their lives individually or collectively creates this divisiveness.

Multiculturalism refers to venues where differing cultures interact and interrelate. Multiculturalism is not cultural assimilation. Assimilation assumes the predominance of one culture over others. It is the basis of the “melting pot” theory where American culture boils out the distinctive features of the foreign cultures of its immigrants. A culture is a shared way of life for a people. Birthplace, language, shared ideas values and habits each give culture distinctiveness. Multiculturalism is the mutual respect for the gifts of differing cultures as they interact.¹¹

Multiculturalism is a reality and this tapestry of human resource and energy must realize that social, economic, educational and spiritual empowerment is not entrenched in one camp or the other, no one island or African country or another oneness of a people. It must be the singleness of mind that drives the wheels of our economics. By no means are we suggesting that all must think alike, but we should try to bring the richness of our multiculturalism as the root and foundation for those things that bind us and keep a cohesive relationship that will bring about economic and spiritual development. (Psalm 133:1) “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”¹²

¹¹ Douglas W. Ruffle, *The World is in our Parish* (Program Unit on Evangelism and Church Growth General Ministries of the United Methodist Church, 475 Riverside Drive, NY), 3.

¹² Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible.

At a “think tank” consultation on multicultural ministry held in San Antonio, Texas, in 1994, the following definition was articulated:

A multicultural congregation is one, which seeks to respond to the general call of the Christian church that was born on the day of Pentecost, reaching all peoples, nations, languages and cultures. It endeavors to reflect the diversity of its community in every aspect of communal life and ministry. It is a Christ-centered congregation around which many equally valued cultures live, love and share their faith in Jesus Christ.¹³

New paradigms are essential for the church and community. Language is the key that opens the door to connecting our diversity. In the simple acts of communication, commonalities that were destroyed by the various passages that brought about separation will be rebuilt. We will discover, by rebuilding the bridges, that we can sing the old songs but also a new song in our land because we understand the language and the culture.

Understanding this basic motif, we will agree with Kennon L. Callahan’s analysis:

When you analyze the significant relational groupings in a church, you will discover distinctive sub-cultural grouping with distinctive goals and value systems; distinctive customs, habits, and traditions; distinctive leadership and decision making processes; distinctive sacred places of meeting; and distinctive vision of the future.¹⁴

It is paramount that we seek to address and develop the multiculturalism in our church. In order to do this, cultural identity must be maintained. To do any less would be a failure. Multiculturalism must be interwoven into any model or design for ministry. Otherwise this factor will ultimately make culture irrelevant and subsequently culture will

¹³ “Think Tank Consultation on Multiculturalism,” held at Our Lady of the Pillar, San Antonio, Texas, November 29-December 1, 1994, sponsored by the National Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

¹⁴ Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership, Building on the Twelve Keys* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 110-111.

become irrevocable. This, in turn, will then eradicate the ancestral ties of people. Carlyle

Fielding Stewart III wrote:

It is difficult to develop models of church growth that will reach the black masses without cultural relevancy and spirituality, which are rooted in the African American experience, which in the same vein, it is difficult to reach the white masses without cultural relevancy and evangelical fervor.

In order to reach God's people, we must speak the language of culture. In order to transform God's people we must speak the language of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, cultural captivity, cultural negation, and cultural domestication of African sources and influences have resulted in the demise of numerous churches because they have failed to develop ministries that are relevant to the needs and concerns of the people living in the communities that they are called to serve. The focus, then, of the African American church in particular, and the larger mainstream church in general, must shift to *self-empowerment* and the revitalization and transformation of the people of God so as to establish a new heaven and a new earth.¹⁵

Westchester must come to grips with its multiculturalism by becoming an inclusive congregation with the understanding that there is but one God and one worship service. The members of this congregation are holding on to the mental structure and practices that were part of the fabric of the church when they became a member. The majority accepted this primarily because their entire life was steeped in being a British subject. The basic ancestry of Africans and those from the Caribbean is rooted in the British culture from church policy and philosophy to economic and spiritual empowerment. Understanding this cultural language one must realize there are some pre-requisites to economic and spiritual growth. Although we are in the 21st century, it is vital that we resurrect the spiritual basics that have sustained the church and laid the foundations for growth. This will stimulate the cultural reference that has faded.

¹⁵ Charlyle Fielding Stewart III, *The Empowerment Church: Speaking a New Language for Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1951), 15.

When we begin to discuss our diversity of language and cultures, we will quickly observe the hurdles and walls that separate cultural groups. Each of these cultural groups must learn to work and function as one to create a single and powerful force.

Communications

The main African languages spoken in Nigeria are Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Edo, Efik, and English. Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups, but three stand out: the Hausa in the north, the Ibo (or Igbo) in the east and the Yoruba in the west. In Western Nigeria, most people speak Yoruba. From a cultural perspective, most Yorubas speak their native language in the home among adults, but some speak English to their children. This is done primarily to instill fluency of the English language in children at an early age. There are regional accents that distinguish residents of different areas within Lagos. There are also coded local slang terms, which identify people from particular areas of the city.

Besides English, which is the official language, there are four major languages spoken in Sierra Leone (Mende, Temne, Limba and Krio), but there are also a number of other minor languages. Krio is actually a broken form of English and it is the lingua Franca, which helps us cut across the communication barrier. Local language(s) are used at home, even when speaking to children, while English is used in school and in offices.

In Jamaica, English is the official language. However, the language of the poorer classes is 'patois'-a form of broken English, chiefly relegated to the less educated but widely used also by the intelligentsia in Pantomimes, or plays. This is often done to ridicule the upper classes. In business, in schools, patois is not recognized and not encouraged and is a social demarcation between the haves and the have-nots.

Non-Verbal Communication

It is believed that childhood is the foundation that determines the quality of a society, so each society prides themselves on the education and nurturing of their children. Their children learn local customs and traditions at an early age. The traits of non-verbal communication are similar throughout Africa and the Caribbean. For example, children are taught to be silent in the presence of adults and to look for guidance in their mother's eyes. A Nigerian mother's eyes communicate to her children when they should leave the room or even refrain from doing something that displeases her. Another form of non-verbal communication indigenous to Nigerian culture is the "talking drum." Selected people are taught the art of communicating with the drum and children learn the language of the talking drum just as they learn their native tongue. Festivals often include performances of the talking drum accompanied by interpretive dance routines. In this culture other forms of non-verbal communication can include the wearing of rings, badges, hairstyles or specific designs on dress wear that identify members of cults or sub-cultural groups. Another relevant symbol is the wearing of very expensive beads called "iyun," which signify the wearer's wealth, political and/or social status. Similarly, the way people walk and their physical posture sends an important non-verbal message. In the Nigerian belief a "rich man should never be in a hurry," so one is taught to walk slowly and regally.

As in Nigeria, non-verbal communication and facial expressions are predominant in Sierra Leone cultures as well. For instance, a special look tells a child that s/he is in deep trouble and should behave or quietly disappear from the scene. Festivals to mark birth, marriage, death or other ceremonies utilize various forms of non-verbal communication communicating with the ancestral spirits.

Facial expression is a significant form of non-verbal communication. The use of unspoken messages is equally important among the people. Greeting protocol, appearance, form, and manner are extremely important when dealing with cultures that are concerned with formality. The more formal a culture is, the more reserved their approach to business and their approach to communication. Indirect modes of communication also affect intercultural communication. The manner in which something is expressed is just as important (if not more important) as what is said. Time is a valuable and often limited resource; it is often wasted in deference to the importance placed on maintaining or establishing relationships. As it relates to the chromatics of non-verbal communications, Nigerians operate in a polypchronic time. I've learned that Africans and those originating from the Caribbean Islands are very resistant to change and make every attempt to preserve their native culture even when they relocate to other geographical areas.

Rites, Religious Customs, Nature, Etc.

People in every culture wish to know about the world around them, whether one speaks of the world in physical, social, or even spiritual terms. There is a construct of a worldview based on their understanding of the nature of human beings and the essence of the natural world, views of space, time, and views of the relationship between human beings and nature. Older people must be treated with respect so that their spirits would later provide their descendants with guidance and wisdom; if disrespected, they would cause harm instead. Generally, the African worldview is about connectedness through the rhythm of the culture. It is not about the individual or the person. They believe that their children are divine gifts from their creator to be nurtured together with their families, the

social and physical environment. They have a deep respect for ancestors and for community tradition that includes placing great value on WHOM each person is, WHO the community is, and the honored place that each member of the family occupies within the community. People are taught not to bring shame on themselves or upon their descendants. As it relates to nature, it is believed that the weather and landscape, the look, feel and smell of the land, and the activities of the people are harmonious with their environment.

Forms of worship in Sierra Leone include Islam, Christianity and to a lesser extent animism/sorcery (not sure of the statistics but Moslems are in the majority). However, it is not uncommon to find people combining their dominant faith with animism or sorcery during certain times based on their traditional beliefs.

One of the most important ceremonies in the culture is the naming ceremony. It is believed that a person's name is very important in determining his or her destiny in life. Tradition calls for the grandfather or head of the family to confer a name on a newborn child. The parents may then add to the name with another name of their choosing. Additionally, the term "Ade" (which means crown) is normally added to the name of the first male child born into a royal family. A significant part of the naming ceremony includes symbols that are meaningful to life. For example, because water and salt are vital to the existence of life, drops of water and grains of salt are placed in the mouth of the child during this ceremony to symbolically equip it with some essentials of life. Further, in this culture it is customary that every family is represented by a living symbol.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Throughout the African Continent there appears to be a high-context culture because their social norms and customs are instilled from childhood and they are expected to be followed implicitly. The Caribbean and Africa cultures are similar collectivistic rather than individualistic. There is a display of tendencies toward solidarity, interdependence, and concern for saving face among their group members. With regard to hierarchy and status, in Nigeria a person's name and physical presentation can reveal his or her status. For example, embroidery on garments called "dashikis" or iyun beads worn by men will reveal their status. In this culture, it is also tradition that bracelets and necklaces are handed down from generation to generation to identify family heritage.

The role of the researcher of this project is to unravel, through planning and organizational restructuring, and operating systems, the culture and language divides that enslave this congregation into compartmental ministry and relationships

The paramount role of the pastor in this context is advocacy, spiritual enlightenment, validation and empowerment. Leadership and management development both of the church and community are key to moving cultural exclusion to cultural inclusion. The pastor must establish an atmosphere and working relationship such that each cultural group, as well each individual person, will feel validated by who and whose they are on the journey that brought them to this place.

There must be present the visible vision and action of multiculturalism throughout, from the pulpit to the home. A firm unwavering vision for ministry must be interwoven into the fabric so that no loose string will unravel, and if so, it will be immediately mended through nurture.

This project will attempt to lift several questions:

1. Given the intrinsic qualities of the various cultures, is the goal of multiculturalism achievable?
2. When in conversation how do the members speak of multiculturalism?
3. Is multiculturalism merely the faces of the congregation and community or is it the leadership and vision of the church?
4. The ultimate question, is it possible for such a diverse congregation and community to work together to bring about economic and spiritual empowerment without diluting the cultural values and principles of culture identity?

The goal of this project is to start a collaborative dialogue within the congregation and community on how we can work together, embracing our culture and language, so that we may become a collective community of witness. I agree with Kennon J. Callahan when he wrote:

Some philosophical systems invite individuals to collapse their identity into the identity of the whole. The way beyond that is not to insist on an individualistic form of individualism, some people only focus on individuality as over against community, while others focus on community as over against individuality. The way forward is not be occupying a middle ground. One must keep both significantly present. Individuality is found in community is led forward by other people's new discovery of individuality in the midst of roots, place, belonging, and sharing and caring.¹⁶

Ministry must take place outside of the individualized box. The Pastor must operate his/her ministry thinking in the culturally diverse society in a paradigm without walls ministry.

¹⁶ Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership, Building on the Twelve Keys* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1990), 112.

The congregation, as we pursue this project, will experience what is hoped to be new and innovative insights that will reshape and remold their vision for ministry in this community. It is the desire of this researcher that multiculturalism be the catalyst of active collectivism for creating partners for Black Church Economic and Spiritual Empowerment.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism and the various concepts associated with it are not new, but the need to fully address the subject is rapidly becoming the topic of seminars throughout the church. It is becoming obvious to those in the ministry that the changing languages and movements in our local church is a new phenomenon occurring each Sunday. New sounds are being heard when the hymns are sung. The dress is changing and the food being sold in the local stores and fruit stands have strong names.

The spirit of the Church appeared to be dying due to old age and the complacency of its congregants. However, there now seems to be a new spirit entering the Church that may sound foreign to the old ears, yet at the same time providing a refreshing tune.

The United Methodist Church is very slowly addressing this new paradigm shift that is taking place. However, it is not moving with the urgency it needs, particularly in the Northeastern Conference. It has, and is still, the product of black and white relations, lagging behind in the area of multiculturalism. This is the single area that will change how ministry must be addressed.

Reverend Stephen A. Rhodes, pastor of Culmore United Methodist in Virginia stated in a speech to the National Division of the General Board of Global Ministries titled: "Pentecost Revisited: From Hostility to Hospitality."

It is my conviction that multicultural ministry is distinct from ministry in homogeneous congregations, and that it is absolutely

imperative that we both identify and claim multicultural ministry not only as a stable, viable model of ministry, but even explore the possibility that multicultural ministry may become the normative model of congregational life in the increasingly multicultural society of the twenty-first century.¹

His major points consist of the dynamics of how our entire systems must change. Our sociological and theological approach must be altered. Worship and even the final view of our resting place are no longer strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens of the household of God.

Cultural diversity must not be pursued because of the correctness (political correctness) or because it seems to be the right thing to do. We must embrace culturalism because it is the Gospel.

Reverend Mark Lykins, pastor of Candor United Methodist Church, Candor, NC and Patricia Lykins, diaconal minister Southern Pine United Methodist Church, Southern Pine, NC write, from the title “Pro-Actively Multicultural,” that in order for multicultural ministry to be effective and authentic it must be sensitive to the different cultures of people. It is important that any ministry look at the whole people, not just the Sunday Morning Worship, the life style, dress and languages. There must be certain characteristics that are viable and pro-active in the life of the church and community:

- Intention
- Share the Sameness
- Celebrate the Differences
- Conflict Resolution
- Table Topping²

¹ Reverend Stephen A. Rhodes, *Pentecost Revisited: From Hospitality To Hospitality*; Keynote Address for the National Division of the General Board of Global Ministries’ Consultation on Multicultural Ministries.

² Reverend Mark Lykins, Pastor of Candor United Methodist Church, Candor, NC, Patricia Lykins, Diaconal Minister, Southern Pines United Methodist Church, Southern Pines, NC; “The world is in our Parish” (Program Unit on Evangelization and Church Growth General Ministries of The United Methodist Church, 475 Riverside Drive, NY 10115, May 1997), 32.

These articles on multiculturalism in the view of these writers are not acculturation nor assimilation but a working agent that will allow cultures to maintain their distinct identity and become a collective body. We are segregated by our culture but we are to become one by our faith in God. The writers conclude by saying:

Multicultural churches exhibit such obedience especially. Remember the prayer for unity that Jesus prayed just before his crucifixion? "I pray, Father, that they may all be one..."

And, remember what Jesus said at the Last Supper? "A new commandment I give to you: that you should love one another as I have loved you. By this all people will know that you are my disciples—by how you love one another." When we live out the things that touched Jesus' heart so deeply—I believe that God blesses us extra for it!³

However, it must be stated that the intentionality of the leadership and inclusive of the total church ministry will lead to the authentic growth and enrichment of the church.

It is of particular note that the writer states that the richness of identity is paramount. Multiculturalism will force us to change how we identify people. Language, such as African Americans use to denote the demographic of a congregation, can no longer be the code to characterize a given church or community because people of color are the only attendees.

Douglas Ruffle, author of "Building Blocks for a Multicultural Congregation," supports this writer's assessment that a church comprised solely of people of color does not in itself signify a unified congregation. Segregation is a hidden concern in congregations who are simply pretentious.⁴

³Reverend Mark Lykins and Patricia Lykins, "The World is in our Parish," 37.

⁴ Douglas Ruffle, "Building Blocks for a Multicultural Congregation," *Multi-ethnic Net Circular* (Fall 1993).

In an article “Rooftop or Rain Barrel” (edited by Douglas Ruffle) that appeared in *The Multi-Ethnic Net Circular*, August 1999, the author’s conclusion suggests that regardless of the multi-ethnicity or multiculturalism of a church membership, the congregation must seek to be one body in Christ. The intent of observing cultural diversity can be seen in special events, each cultural group is given a night to exhibit their cultural cuisine.⁵

Douglas Ruffle edited an article “Is Multi-Culturalism a Threat to Historically Black Churches?” (*Multi-Ethnic Net Circular*, August 2000). The question of the author is: “will Multi-culturalism threaten the core values and identity of historically black churches?”⁶

Ruffle’s question poignantly states the essence of concern that prompted this project. This researcher has witnessed the impact of unbridled multiculturalism upon the traditions of three historically black churches to which he has been appointed. During tenure at the current appointment, Westchester United Methodist Church, this researcher as pastor, has systematically highlighted cultural diversity through special events for specific cultural groups.

This discussion is relevant today, because in certain areas and denominations there is no longer the historically Black Church. The researcher can base this reality on the three parishes to which he has been appointed. But the intent of observing cultural diversity here at Westchester United Methodist Church can be seen in special events, each culture group is given a night to exhibit their cultural cuisine.

⁵ Douglas Ruffle, “Rooftop or Rain Barrel,” *Multi-ethnic Net Circular* (August 1999).

⁶ Douglas Ruffle, “Is Multi-Culturalism a Threat to Historically Black Churches,” *Multi-ethnic Net Circular* (August 2000).

Multiculturalism must be embraced and celebrated, but the pastor is key in setting the stage for celebration. The pastor must make sure that multiculturalism is visible and visionary and that culture identity with integrity is at the core of any event or worship.

The question of any pastor or members of a local church, when people visit their church is, will you only see that this is where people have gathered to congregate or is this where there is a congregation at Worship where God is present?

The church is only a sign of God's coming reign. It points beyond itself to give the world something beyond the confines of the church's walls. The church is a place where any sign of weakness can be transformed. Intentionality teaches that God stands above and before us and offers all of us Grace, Forgiveness and Healing, and it is the place where any sign of brokenness can be transformed, not based upon those who are members of color but of all people.

In the 1940 Pete Seeger wrote a song that Peter, Paul and Mary recorded in 1990 entitled "All Mixed Up,"

ALL MIXED UP

Pete Seeger – Stormking Music Inc. BMI

This doesn't mean we will all be the same,
We'll have different faces and different names
Long live many different kinds of races
It's a difference of opinion that makes horse races
Just remember the rule about rules, brother
What could be right for one could be wrong for the other
And take a tip from La Belle France: "Viva la difference!" ⁷

This is an old song but with a clearly visionary view of the world and particularly the church. We should not ask for change or to be different but for the opportunity to

⁷ Pete Seeger, All Mixed Up, Stormaking Music, 1940.

share with one another regardless of who, where, how or when we become part of a church and community. Our urban communities reflect this diversity.

Being intentional about multi-ethnic and multi-cultural ministry (article appeared in the *Multi-ethnic Net Circular* of March 2001)

The apostle Paul shared a vision of oneness in Christ when he wrote, "there is no longer Jew or Greek..." The vision of multi-ethnic/multi-cultural church is that persons from different races and nationalities come together to be part of a community faith, heirs of the promise of oneness in Jesus Christ. Fifteen or twenty years ago a congregation with mixed races and nationalities often was called "a church in transition." The assumption, and often the reality, was that because of demographic changes in the community, the church would undergo changes as well, as in the example of an all-white church that becomes an all-black church. Today multi-ethnic/multi-cultural church means something distinct. Churches are celebrating the fact that they intentionally seek to represent the populace of their communities in all its racial and ethnic diversity. Moreover, there are Christians convinced that this is the way God intended things to be for the church. ⁸

The myths and stereotypes about multiculturalism has bordered up the sign of what God intended the church and community to be to a point that we can hang a sign outside of the church where the name of the church is displayed. It will give the name of the church but underneath it will read "but it is handicapped." We do not encourage an all mixed up church community.

There is the hope that we can begin to unmask the layers of complexities that have become stumbling blocks to cultural diversity, and have impeded economic and spiritual empowerment in our Black Communities.

Toni and Kenny Simpson, *Cultural Understanding Enhances Communication*, state that communication is a constant challenge. Words have different meanings in different

⁸ *Multi-Ethnic Net Circular* (March 2001).

cultures.⁹ It is important as the matter of cultural diversity is addressed; we need to be intentional in how we communicate with others so that we are not offensive.

Eric H. F. Law writes:

We are living in a permanent whitewater society. Some of us may be too scared to deal with this rapid and profound challenge. So we avoid getting too close to the rapids, thereby cutting ourselves off from the situation, but we only use Methodists that are too shallow to address the deep challenges of diversity that we are facing. As a result, our initiatives and hard work only leave us exhausted and with few results.¹⁰

The church is facing one of its greatest challenges with the same old concepts that are doomed to fail if the leadership and vision of the church do not take seriously the culture diversity that we are facing.

In summary, as we read the numerous works written on the subject, it is important that we examine the eyes from which the writers describe the language of their arguments. Noted with particular concern where the material carries a predominant bias toward one culture or race in order that it is fully explored must be as inclusive as possible.

Cultural diversity is more than a “melting pot.” It is individual cultures with their own distinctness. Cultures are as distinct as onions, peppers, carrots, and various meats. When they are stewed together, each keeps and maintains its own identity while joining together to please the palate.

⁹ Toni and Kenny Simpson, “Welcoming Changes,” *The world is in our Parish* (May 1997): 44.

¹⁰ Eric H. F. Law, *Sacred Acts Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 20.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC AND SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT

In this chapter the writer discusses the theoretical, biblical, theological and historical foundation of the model of ministry. This six to twelve month project addresses the approach for cultural diversity in creating a partnership for Black Church economic and spiritual empowerment here at Westchester United Methodist Church. This model of ministry will create a new paradigm for liberating and empowering this church and community.

I have struggled with the division of cultural diversity that has become a cancer dividing and tearing at the fabric of the church for over twenty years. I have watched this disease drain the life of the church, resulting in stagnant worship and a total disenfranchisement between church and community. I bore scars from my very first appointment. I have seen the economic power dissipate with what is referred to as the evaporating dollar syndrome. The dollars used to purchase groceries and goods leave the community by 7:00 p.m. never to return. Sunday after Sunday the churches are full but people are not sharing, nor are they celebrating their differences. Different garments are worn, not knowing that in many cases, the garments being worn are inappropriate because of their cultural, social and political symbolism. These experiences, along with those from my travels to Africa (Ghana West-Africa), several Caribbean countries and across the

countries of Europe and Asia, have shaped the concept and vision that the philosophical and practical approach to economic and spiritual empowerment can be accomplished in a culturally diverse community. This can be accomplished, however, only through years of understanding of language and culture. Through this understanding process, liberation and empowerment can take root. In the black community, the church is the single and most influential link for this connection.

There was a period in the history of the Black Church when many spoke with a clear and single voice. The African American Church's vivid visibility, and strong and advocacy for social change proved pivotal in the collective struggles of the people. It was further perceived and accepted that the unified voice belonged to either the preachers or teachers. This gave Black Churches and the larger community legitimacy as they sought to address a multitude of ecclesiastical, spiritual, and economic needs.

Historically, it was the church that led its people spiritually and economically, instilling hope in the midst of despair. Language empowered and authenticated a people who had lost identity and were disenfranchised, exploited, and dehumanized by a society that enslaved them. The liberating language of the Church permeated the souls of African Americans to such an extent that it was not only a spiritual healing and a source of economic empowerment, but also a renewing source of consciousness that they took to the fields and workstations during the week.

The language of the traditional Black Church has taken a paradigm shift. Congregations have become fractured and has reshaped by the culture of the community. There are jargons spoken today, and words used, which are heard but not understood because of the hip-hop culture and other cultural phenomena from which they emanate. The church and the community are polarized by this phenomenon.

The church must resolve the basic contradictions in its environment by addressing the chronic conditions of diversity in our society. The church must be active in eradicating the conditions and the systems that create spiritual laxity and material insecurity among God's people. While examining the diversity we need to sustain the cultures of people who share our ecclesiastical structures so that they might better maintain their cultural identity while worshipping and developing economic and spiritual empowerment with people unlike themselves.

Dr. Samuel D. Procter speaks of the role of the pastor in culture diversity: "It is important that the pastor creates relationships of change that will filter down; the spirit of the congregation will create a partnership of cooperation that a vision of upward growth can become visible in the church. This is even more imperative in a multicultural context in that the divide interpretations and the authentic multicultural ministry must have at its core an unbridled sense of sensitivity so that people of different cultures may seek and create unpretentious willingness of working as one. It is important to understand that ministry must be looked at not from the eyes of humankind, but from the eyes of God. This ministry is an intentional ministry that becomes a way of life. Different people's lifestyles and cultures become the norm in the community."

Rev. Mark Lynkins speaks of Intentionality: a Biblical based principle ("*...go into all the nations*" – *Matthew 28:18*). Accepting the attitude that we are brothers and sisters in need when situations present themselves (Luke 10:30) and because we are in the sight

of Jesus, we are not just hearers but doers of the Word (James 1:22). It is important that the church create ways and means of extending the invitations for diversity.¹

John 17:20 frames for us the goal of cultural diversity. The image of the Church must be that of a quilt, consisting of many pieces of different cloths, various displays of color and textures sewn together. This quilt binds together all of the differences, colors, shapes, fabric, texture by just a simple thread just as we are all human in a multicultural church and community with a common thread which is God. Through His love we are all held together (Matthew 22: 37-39). The human quilt of differences reveals God's face in the world. Our mission must be not to deny the differences but embrace them as one. While embracing this unity, we must allow for individual authenticity so that a church that physically resembles a smorgasbord becomes a virtual "melting pot" of spiritual and economic empowerment. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8).²

When internationality and oneness become the practice and purpose of people of different cultures, no one will be denied or devalued. A multicultural church will be able to draw from this resource of diversity. Douglas W. Ruffle says, and I completely agree:

Change can be frightening and painful. It means we have to think and act differently. Change takes us out of our comfort zone.

Change takes time. It is ironic that in an era when changes occur rapidly, adjustment to change can take such a long time.

Some adjustments can be made quickly and without much cost in a church. But these are surface changes, such as increasing the

¹ Reverend Mark Lykins, Pastor of Candor United Methodist Church, Candor, NC, Patricia Lykins, Diaconal Minister, Southern Pines United Methodist Church, Southern Pines, NC; "The world is in our Parish" (Program Unit on Evangelization and Church Growth General Ministries of The United Methodist Church, 475 Riverside Drive, NY 10115, May 1997), 32.

² The Oxford Annotated Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

church's visibility, putting up better signs, showing more warmth to visitors, or improving the nursery. These suggestions for improving a congregation's hospitality are useful, but they are not the kinds of changes needed for transformation.

True transformation addresses the very nature of what it means to be a church. A church must address its entire system of being in mission and ministry to become transformed. This goes to the heart of how the church functions, how it makes decisions, how people relate to one another, how the church's image of itself influences ministry, and whether the church is focused on itself or others. As with any discovery, it takes patience. People must be involved. Analysis is needed. Dialogue is required. It will take time.³

"The Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and takes no bribes" Deuteronomy 10:17
Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:16.

These words establish the foundation of the church and the blueprint for being inclusive in our celebrating cultural differences. Eric H. F. Law stated:

We look at culture in two parts, external and internal. External culture is the conscious part of culture. It is the part that we can see, taste, and hear. It consists of acknowledged beliefs and values. It is explicitly learned and can be easily changed. However, this constitutes only a small part of our culture. The major part is the internal part, which consists of the unconscious beliefs, thought patterns, values, and myths that affect everything we do and see. It is implicitly learned and very hard to change.⁴

True empowerment must reach beneath the conscious into the unconscious which is more difficult to change. The conscious we see, touch, feel, smell and taste, but the unconscious is not privileged to the five senses of humans, and it is a learned behavior. When people become members of a church they bring "instinct," which is an innate cultural behavior into an established culture. Conflict is a natural response. The leadership

³ Douglas W. Ruffle, *The Discovery Church Journey: An Invitation to Congregational Transformation* (New York: Board of Global Ministries, 2002).

⁴ Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With The Lamb: A Spirituality Of Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), 4, 5.

of the church must prepare for this by creating models for this change. Enlightenment through transformation must be established by means of a careful and systematic curriculum that will not threaten the fragile lines of communication that exist by a thread.

Christians should immerse themselves in scriptures, to nourish and rekindle faith in God and to be reaffirmed in their sense of mission. Scriptures are not meant to be used as tools of destruction but as a foundation that keeps us fresh and open to the possibilities that God unfolds in our lives each day.

A very relevant and pressing question is, "What methodology will enable the Black population to begin to believe that they, in keeping with biblical prophecy, will be liberated from the oppressor?" The concept of attempting to understand society and culture through biblical interpretation is often not practically applied to the issues of Black hostility. One can understand why there is skepticism, for a whole nation of people claims to let the Bible be their foundation and yet the same condition exists. Thus, Latta Thomas' statement had meaning for black churches devoted to God's liberating activity:

[I]n reality, the Bible, when allowed to come through without human tampering by people with shallow minds and evil motives, not only does not support human oppression, against mistreatment of human beings as a matter of commitment to the God of heaven, earth and history.⁵

Scripture testifies to God's activity in history. God's revelation is seen through the pre and post exodus. Moses led the people from Egypt. He did not advocate the overthrow of a government. God's revelation is evident in actions and compassion on behalf of the deprived and the outcast.

⁵ Latta R. Thomas, *Bible Faith and Black America* (Valley Forge, PA: Jordan Press 1976), 11.

What is the theological basis for this study? This study is an effort in practical theology. Practical theology rises at the intersection of theological reflection and ecclesiastical action. As with the Nehemiah community, our Christian community must see God as a loving and forgiving and accepting God. Ours is the God who is inviting us to live as citizens of God's own Kingdom. God has lovingly created us out of a multiplicity of experiences but invites us to put away from our communities the foreignness of cultural exile and exclusion. Ours is a community of transformation where the power of God expressed through God's people creates new expressions of Divine love. The source of this power is in God alone and relationship with God for those in Nehemiah's community and our own, instills unassailable confidence. This is the confidence that empowers and motivates.

Theological reflection that motivates us to action is not only a reflection on the lessons of Nehemiah but on the lessons from our own lives. The book of Nehemiah offers some critical insights to those who attempt to understand Nehemiah and apply the wisdom of Nehemiah to the multicultural setting. There was a shared expectation that God was forgiving and that exiles had been brought back to a point of great possibility; they were given the opportunity to create with God a new expression of God's grace. Theology here is the site-specific action that a shared understanding of God brings a community to. It is the authentic and faithful expression of a Christian community's action when faced with the question – as representatives of the loving Savior, what are we called to do? The theology of this type of action must be based on a shared appreciation for the invitation extended by God to all those who choose to accept it. This invitation is for those who desire to be members of the family of God, those who choose to become participants in an

abundant life of faith and those who choose to act out of that faith participating in the transformation of the world.

This practical theology is derived from a critical understanding within a Christian community of faith regarding an identified challenge and the collaborative and creative efforts of members of that community. It is designed to transform both the faith community and the larger community as well. This is what is essential in Christian faith – the characteristic ways of God in the world and the basic assumptions.

Our theology involves us in acts of cooperative worship and cooperative service that springs from the covenant culture of Jesus Christ. The acts of worship and service are part of our identity as the people of God, God's purchased possession, and reflect the power promised the people in covenant. The theology of gathered believers working together link the actors inextricably to the promise of redemption and the promised return of Jesus. The covenant of Christian community reminds us that our meager efforts are under girded and directed by the explosive power of the Omnipotent God. Covenant reminds the church community that we are not an assemblage of acquaintances but believers who have a corporate existence, in spite of perceivable differences in origin, in the consummation of God's Kingdom. This understanding of who we are leads to new encounters and possibilities for the church and for the greater community, fresh understanding of the covenant that exists between God and God's people.

This study regards what is essentially a new church start. The Westchester United Methodist Church has begun a journey of redefining itself according to the vision the Lord Jesus has given the Pastor. The vision involves the valuing of difference and the celebration of diversity; the incorporation and acceptance of cultural difference in worship; and service as originally displayed in the New Testament Church. From our Biblical

perspective, the diversity of languages is documented in Genesis 11:1-9. God confused the language of those human beings because they sought to glorify and exalt themselves rather than glorify the Almighty God. In this confusing of the language, God was trying to remind them who He was. It is important to understand that God is not confined to individual cultures but He moves in and out of all cultures.

As we look at the early Church and how it struggled with intercultural dialogue and ministering, we can read Acts 15:5-11. There is a dialogue between the Pharisees and Peter that in order for the Gentiles to be the keeper of the land of Moses, they (the Gentiles) must be circumcised. This ritual argument, according to Peter, has nothing to do with being saved, this would just be a yoke around the Gentiles neck.

The Tower of Babel mentality can be described as ethnocentrism:

Ethnocentrism is the belief that our cultural values and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious, are the best and that we possess the superior culture. In our separateness, we build our towers with our unspoken assumptions, values, and beliefs.⁶

It is important in multicultural relations to recognize our own thoughts and in doing so, not to harness others by this yoke around the neck.

Redefining of community, to affirm the inclusion of diversity in culture and theology, frees us from “ecclesiastical neo-colonialism. This sentiment is echoed from a Native American context:

Missionaries frequently combined their claims for the superiority of their faith with an assumed superiority of their culture because for centuries European culture had been a primary carrier of Christianity. Most missionaries uncritically combined biblical truths with parts of their own cultural framework, dispensing a gospel of soap alongside a gospel of grace. They urged industry, punctuality, and private enterprise as much as love of neighbor. Native

⁶ Eric F. Law, *The Bush was Blazing but not consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press 1996), 43.

Americans were expected to abandon habits rooted in traditions going back millennia in order to embrace foreign concepts of land ownership and work, authority structure and family relationships.⁷

Considering that when we look at Acts 2, the Day of Pentecost, people filled with the spirit spoke in different tongues among people of different cultures. The essence of this is that it was not the tongue that did the communicating but the manner in which it was said and the hearer's interpretation.

Westchester chooses to glorify and exalt God by speaking a common language of praise, worship, and service to God, in order that individuals and the community may be empowered. It is this context that the disruption and separation in Genesis may be addressed in a way that betrays the relational, Kingdom perspective of Jesus Christ in the Westchester United Methodist Church community.

In our multi-cultural settings, different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups can work together in bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth. This is a Christian community where there is life after worship, where Sunday does not end. The warmth and fellowship, concern and support expressed on Sunday is carried over into the lives of church members throughout the rest of the week and extends to the broader community as well. Communities are built and re-built; lives are restored and improved as a result of the expression of true Christian concern.

Nehemiah's Israelite community was emerging from the crisis of exile into the crisis of re-forming a viable community. Similarly, the 21st century church is emerging from crisis of exile. We have focused on building our own institutions, programs and

⁷ Henry Warner Bowden, "Native American Presbyterians: Assimilation, Leadership, and Future Challenges," in *The Diversity of Discipleship: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century* eds. Milton J. Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991).

competencies and exiled ourselves from the need to rebuild our communities. Our people, our communities, our families are in ruin but our rituals are alive and well. Our worship lasts for two hours or so while the despair of social and economic exiles in our communities extends throughout the week.

Diverse Community

The Nehemiah community had to work with diversity and responded to difference in a rather restricted way. “Foreign” wives were “put away.” Ethnic differences were purged from the community and a pure race of Israelites was welcomed back to Jerusalem. Citizenship and participation in the “new” community was based on genetic continuity. The other issue of *citizenship* is essential to the Pauline argument (Ephesians 2:19). The work of the Nehemiah community gave expression to that shared understanding of citizenship. The returnees realized that they were citizens entitled to the protection of a loving and forgiving God. Members of the various cultural groups of the 21st century Christian community must also see themselves as citizens of a common country and owners of the blessings, privileges, and promises of that shared citizenship.

Shared Culture

The power of the community for our interpretation is in the diversity of gifts that were represented in the Nehemiah story and in our own Christian communities. The diversity of gender, preparation, experience, all contributed to the rebuilding, and enhanced the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The vision could not have been accomplished without utilizing the diversity of gifts. No gift was expendable and we are

invited to see that each skill, even those un-named skills, may find essential expressions in the rebuilding project. There was an attempt to include all those willing to work.

The shared Israelite culture created the bond among the Nehemiah community. Experiences and histories may have been different, however the crucial understanding that they were the people of the Eternal God provided the sufficient motivation and connection to create a new living community of faith. There was a shared understanding of covenant with the Covenant keeping God and with the Forgiving God. The returnees knew that God's promises were inviolable and that the protection that God had extended in so many other life threatening situations would continue to be available to them. It was this understanding that inspired and empowered the community of returnees to confront fear and intimidation and enabled them to continue the work until it was accomplished (Nehemiah 2:19-20)

It was this same firmly held and widely shared understanding that enabled the returnees to embrace hope and build on faith. Despair could not rob them of the vital energy needed for rebuilding. When serious problems arose (Chapter 5), the common culture of practical faith in action created the possibility for acceptable solutions according to the provisions of the Law. There was a guidebook for the shared culture. The shared culture was considered indisputable for our 21st century Christian communities. It is in such a shared culture of the promise and grace of Jesus Christ freely extended to all, that the promises of that grace might be fulfilled in Christian community in spite of differences that exist in multi cultural communities.

In our own communities, the differences in education levels, skills, preparedness, and culture could serve as impediments to creating unified and cohesive Christian communities. The unifying factor that exists, however, in spite of so much dissimilarity is

culture of Jesus Christ that enables us to live as “a sign” of the coming reign of God. The homogeneity of Christian communities is a thing of the past especially in urban communities. There no longer exists in most of our urban churches consistency in income, educational levels, or ethnic origin. We have finally become the New Testament Church of which we have long dreamed.

Similar to the situation in Nehemiah where ethnic cleansing occurred in order to proceed with the rebuilding of the Holy City, a consciousness cleansing is necessary in order for Christian communities to proceed with the work of Jesus Christ. Differences exist as an obstacle to oneness in our thinking. The mind of Christ is opposed where ethnic, sexual, and age differences are considered important and maintainable distinctions.

A study of Nehemiah reveals a Divine process for creating Godly community. The paradigm is clear. The community must first understand its present state – this is the state of *Problem Recognition*. Nehemiah had graphically illustrated to the community in exile the nature of their transgressions and conditions of their existence. This was not news to the exiles; Nehemiah was certainly not the first to raise concerns and level well-deserved accusations. There was no question but that the relationship between God and Israelite community had been seriously damaged. It was no secret that the returnees were in distress. It was clear that Jerusalem was in ruin and the returnees needed help. The Israelites recognized the problems but few acted to correct the problems.

Nehemiah goes on to identify a strategy for addressing the problem. Nehemiah first used influence and leveraged that influence to amass/marshal resources. He then took proactive steps to neutralize potential threats. Nehemiah evaluated (2:12-15), surveyed and assessed the work before beginning it. He had a clear idea of the magnitude of the problem as well as possible solutions. He created political alliances and established a base

of support. (2:16 – 18). This second essential step in creating a new community might be called the Assessment and Preparation stage.

Similar to the returning exiles, as followers of Christ Jesus we share a common culture. Our origins are the same; we share one story that describes our beginnings in the exploitation that occurred at Pentecost. We share responsibility for furthering the goals of the Lord Jesus Christ just as our first century forbears did (Matthew 28: 19 – 20). The job description of the 21st century Christian has not changed since its description by Jesus Christ in the upper room commissioning (John 13: 1 – 17). What culture do we share? We share a culture of love and commitment to one another, (John 13: 31 – 35), that supercedes countries of origin or political perspectives.

This is the shared culture understanding that Paul exhorted the Ephesians and the Corinthians to embrace (Ephesians 4:1-25; I Corinthians 12: 14-31), where the members of Christian community see themselves as a well functioning unit and members of one body in Christ Jesus. This is the shared understanding that provides for the foundation for Christian service in our 21st century community. This is the culture to which we are heirs. We share the culture of the “sent one” (John 17:15 – 19). We share the culture of those who see with the eyes of Christ and minister with the compassion and hands of Christ.

Compassion

Compassion regards our willingness to suffer with those who suffer, not to succumb to the oppression of suffering but to labor with them through suffering. It is a compulsion to enter into the situation without sympathy or empathy but with a desire to labor together in order that lives might be improved. The text tells us that Nehemiah was moved with compassion (Nehemiah 1:4), and as a result, Nehemiah sought the Lord’s

guidance regarding appropriate action. Nehemiah was moved to share the plight of the returnees, to carry the burden with them, but beyond this response, Nehemiah identified with the returnees, his brothers and other men of Judah. Nehemiah saw himself as a member of a group, and responsible for affecting the well being of that group. Nehemiah saw himself as a member of covenant culture (Nehemiah 1:5) of Israel and responsible to the ideals of that culture. Nehemiah assumed responsibility for the condition of a community that he was not a part of physically. His concern was, however, for the reproach that the Lord and The Lord's people suffered as a result of the absence of civil authority in Jerusalem.

Covenant

The text suggests that this compassion led to a reaffirmation, for Nehemiah, of covenant. He understood well the commitment that God had made to the people of Israel. He understood that God's commitment was irrevocable, and Nehemiah understood God would honor that commitment (1:5). Nehemiah understood the covenant extended back through history and into the future of Israel:

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessings and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the uttermost parts of heaven from then will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy

fathers possessed and thou shall possess it; and he will do thee good and multiply thee above thy fathers” (Deuteronomy 30:1-5).⁸

This same level of understanding regarding the covenant culture of God that binds Christian communities is what must motivate our communities to enter into relationship with communities in need. There is no possibility of failure given the expectations and example given Christian communities by the Lord Jesus Christ. This understanding of covenant culture of Jesus Christ releases Christian communities from human limitations for participation in divine action.

Commitment

The commitment that Nehemiah and the returnees experienced was not a commitment to a great and exciting plan, not to a powerful individual, nor to the heady energy generated through group action and collaborative effort. It was a commitment to the Eternal God and to the purposes assigned to God’s church. Theirs was a faithful response, the only response to a Faithful God. They realized that they were responsible for faithful action in God’s Name and to the True God. They realized the state of Jerusalem was a reflection on the Omnipotent God and an embarrassment to those who called themselves by God’s Name. In faith, they had to correct the situation. The commitment was to doing the right thing, not through their own efforts but success rather through the intervention of Divine initiative, that which would result in success.

Eric Law offers a potent example for our consideration in his book, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation*.⁹ The author describes the

⁸ *Keyword Study Bible*.

⁹ Eric H. F. Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002). Note: Chapter 5 gives the framework of congregational change.

change that occurred at St. Timothy's Church as a re-conversion, a transformation where a congregation that was experiencing a decline in membership remembered who they were as "God's people." The members of St. Timothy's began to understand what it meant to be "the church" and to act as members of the Lord's body. The commitment this church exhibited was not to their old ways of doing or being. The commitment was to the Lord Jesus Christ and His will for His community of believers in that place. The members of the congregation realized that attention to their own survival and efforts to maintain the status quo was wholly inconsistent with God's will for them. Self-absorption prevented the members of St. Timothy's from seeing the need around them and from realizing their calling to be in the world as representatives of Christ Jesus. The members of St. Timothy's realized that they were focused on self-preservation rather than serving the needs of the wider community. They were addressing their own concerns rather than the Master's concern for people. This is the holy revelation that transformed St. Timothy's and this is the same revelation that motivated Nehemiah's returnees.

Cooperation

Prior to the Bible Studies workshops and seminars, the membership of Westchester were perfectly content being within their own cultural groups as they planned and promoted the Church's transformation.

Eric Law addresses this under the following headings:

1. Delve into and reveal the internal organizational culture
2. Discern actively the will of God
3. Differentiate between our way and God's way
4. Decide to follow God¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid.

Having discovered his own compassion, and having re-discovered a fuller appreciation of covenant as it applied to the situation in Jerusalem, Nehemiah marshaled and leveraged available resources (2:8-9), used his political influence creatively (2:7), and shared the vision with other members of covenant community (Nehemiah 2: 16-18;20). Acceptance of that shared culture, shared commitment, and shared compassion by the returnees made this extraordinary project possible. In spite of differences in perspective, skills, and gender, the work proceeded with incredible speed with goldsmiths and apothecaries (Neh.3:8), priests (Neh.3:22) and Levites (Neh.3:17), women (Neh.3:12), and rulers (Neh.3:9,19). The shared culture and the commitment it engendered eliminated differences to the extent that the Jerusalem project could be completed.

This is the challenge that faces our congregations. We must recognize that we share a culture in spite of real or perceived differences and that there are expectations placed on us by God in order that we may share and communicate that culture. Our challenge lies in an ability to embrace covenant, eliminate difference and proceed with the work assigned to us. Our focus on cultural, social, educational, and gender differences represents the Sanballat and Tobiah spirit in our Christian communities. The lesson of Nehemiah, and the theological foundation shared there, force us to recognize that the work at hand requires the committed involvement of each individual in the Christian community. Cultural differences can be effective disruptors to the work when they are held up as a source of division, antagonism or exclusion, (Gal 3:28). Divisions prevent us from recognizing the shared culture and its power to effect change in the larger community. Division effectively conspires against the appropriate and expected witness of God's people in the world.

The Church constructs in my mind a God that cares for humankind. At times it is difficult for me to accept, but I am in the midst of those that have lived through the tribulations, oppressions, contradictions, ills of society and the working of God. There are no doubts that the Church, and God as the Head, is my refuge.

The theology of Blacks can and must be viewed from the point of denial - the denial to live free and the denial of the ability to choose a direction. The Church has become the freedom to release the pain and suffering. The Church stood and still stands as the "exodus" for expressing and experiencing the liberation of God's love.

Therefore, constructing a theology of the Church from the experiences of an oppressed people, the Church should be viewed as having three basic functions. These functions are Preaching (karygma), service (diakonia) and fellowship (koinonia). Perception of these functions by a Christian would neutralize the master/slave mentality that has eroded the basic interpretation of God's people being freed and that humankind was created to share in God's creation. (Genesis 1: 27 – 28) James H. Cone in *Black Theology and Black Power*, states:

[T]he church, then consists of people who have been seized by the Holy Spirit and who have the determination to live as if all depends on God. It has no will of its own, only God's will; it has no duty of its own, only God's duty. Its existence is grounded in God."¹¹

The Church is not founded on beautiful edifices, race, or creeds; instead the church is founded on the suffering of God's people that are enslaved by others. Their relief is

¹¹ James H. Cone, *In Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), 65.

founded in Matthew 5:11: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."¹²

This ministry must be based on scriptures, tradition, experience, and reason, principles that have come out of the Wesley tradition. The scripture is the primary source on which the church is based. The word of God is revealed to us in the Bible, through the historical events of the Old and New Testament. The stories and events presented there are unique testimonies of God's works and self-disclosures. The words scripted there are reserves from which we draw our images.

We, as a people, must have faith in the biblical God and His promise of justice if we obey. The church too must have a special capacity for discernment when people are abused, mistreated, or need healing. The Church community must possess a sense of being embraced and accepted in spite of who they are. This grace and love will be the redemption of an oppressed people. Little thought has previously been given to the manifestation of God's love and self-revelation through Jesus Christ. Jesus freed human beings from the bondage of sin and the structure of evil and divisiveness.

The Incarnation made it possible for humans to be freed through the atonement. Christ took on all the responsibilities of human sin and restored the broken relationship with God. This reconciling function has special implications for this kind of ministry. I wish to establish terms for breaking down barriers that separate African, African Americans, and West Indians in my congregation. The biblical foundation for this ministry is found in the New Testament which depicts the works of Jesus Christ in four different images:

¹² *The Bible Revised Standard Edition*, Matthew 5:11

Financial Image

Jesus speaks of the economy of the slave market and persons as objects of bondage, being sold from one person to another for a price. He addresses the freedom of humanity, based on the kindness of one another; Jesus paid the price to provide freedom for all. (Mark 10:45; I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Romans 3:24; Galatians 3: 13)

Military Image

One gets the image of a battle between identity and division of God's kingdom. Jesus is at a battle with the forces of the devil. Jesus must go to war against the devil to take back God's possession – humankind. (Mark 3:23 – 27; Matthew 22: 40 – 45; Colossians 1: 12; 2:15; I Corinthians 15: 24)

Sacrificial Image

The image that is portrayed is that of an offering, not like any other that has been given. No animal is offered, but Christ. The blood that is shed is not of animals but Christ's blood. The sacrificial lamb is the priest that offered himself. (Mark 14: 22 – 25; Matthew 26: 26 – 29; Luke 22: 15 – 20; John 1:29; I Corinthians 5:7 Hebrews 2:17; 8:10)

Legal Image

God has humanity on trial. God is the judge. Humanity is guilty. The sentence of death is passed down. Jesus being the righteous one takes the punishment of this guilt and suffers the ultimate sacrifice - death. Humankind is acquitted, freed from the bondage of guilt and offered a way to a new life – a choice for each to make for themselves. (Romans 5: 6 – 11; II Corinthians 5: 16 – 21; Colossians 1: 19 – 20)

Through the Kiononia, or community, Christ enters into the purpose and goals of Israel.

Christian Church is that community of persons who 'got the hint', and they refused to be content with human pain and suffering. To receive the power of God unto salvation places a person in a state of Christian existence, making impossible for them to sit still as their neighbors are herded off to prison camps.¹³

The importance of this community (Kiononia) is that it is universal in the unified body, which means one body, one Spirit, one Christ. This implies that there are many members of the body and each has the same importance. Christ is at the head of the body, Paul spoke of this unity in Corinthians 12:13.

For as the body is one and has many members and all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also with Christ. For by one spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether we Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been were made to drink into one Spirit.¹⁴

The imagery of the Church is reflected and is known historically as the creation of the Spirit, (Acts 2), as a marriage and the gathering of the bride and the bridegroom (Matthew 22) and as the people of God (1 Peter 2:9)¹⁵ Today, the church is more prone to view the many and not the one. Language and culture have been allowed to cause a divide that diminishes the cooperative spirit borne of one body, as evidenced in my own church situation.

Acts 2 is related to the Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The disciples waited in one place not knowing what to expect. Then suddenly they were struck by something like fire and they began to speak in tongues. They were filled with the Holy

¹³ Preston N. Williams, "Black Church," *Andover-Newton Quarterly*, (November 1968).

¹⁴ *Key Word Study Bible* - 1 Corinthians 12: 12,13

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Ghost. For the Church, the Holy Spirit enters into our most inner being. The Holy Spirit makes Christ present within us. But like the disciples, we must be “waiting in one place.” That is, we must be unified with no divide preventing the Holy Spirit from entering and running its course. The ideal is to be on one accord in our service to God and each other.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3: 26 - 29¹⁶

The Church is being called as a community to the wedding – a wedding that does not require us, as the community, to bring anything but a communal spirit and ourselves. Therefore, the church must transform its members into reflecting true witnesses of their faith. The good news is not just an internal relationship with God; it is also an outward expression of one's faith in love that is manifested in one's outreach to others. The Church was founded historically on social concerns and changes. The Church, in order for it to be true to itself must take a stand on the moral, social, and economic issues of its time. The leadership of the church must first recognize and then encourage the congregation to recognize the diversity of the membership, the cultural difference, and the imperative to work as one body in cooperative spirit. Howard Grimes said in his book *The Church Redemption*:

Just as the first Christians, when they became members of the body, found that they were bound to one another by common ties, which were even stronger than those natural ties of family, race, religion, and nation, so this koinonia has characterized the communal life of the Church in every generation of its history.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Howard Grimes, *The Church Redemptive* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1951), 51.

There is abundant evidence in scripture to support the kind of reconciling ministry I wish to launch at Westchester United Methodist Church. My task is to build a sense of community despite cultural differences, an effort that is essential to the health of our identity as the body of Christ and to our mission as it involves uplifting people spiritually, economically, and otherwise.

There are many theological models from which to draw in establishing a ministry that brings people together across ethnic and cultural boundaries, to rebuild brokenness that keeps humanity from realizing economic and spiritual empowerment within the body of Christ. However, the Church has often been instrumental in doing just the opposite. The African American Church by its very origin was founded on the basic principles of multi-dimensional ministry. It has been an advocate for reconciliation while assuming this ministry will lead the congregation of Westchester United Methodist Church to become involved in the community socially, economically, and above all spiritually. The Church must be the tree from which all branches of our society grow. It must be a visible, spiritual, and social leader of the community and a supportive advocate of the people's needs. The Church must constantly act as a bridge between the people and the agencies that hold them captive spiritually, socially, and economically. It is an instrument of God working with the total human from a spiritual perspective.

The Church must recommit itself to its original purpose: preaching, educating, and caring for souls and worshipping God, not only locally, but throughout the world. I agree whole-heartedly with James Cone where he states that there are three aspects in which the Church must focus if it is to participate in God's liberation. The Church:

It proclaims the reality of divine liberation. This is what the New Testament calls preaching the gospel. The gospel is the proclamation of God's liberation as revealed in the event of Jesus

and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Matthews 28: 19 – 20)

The Church not only proclaims the good news of freedom, it actively shares in the liberation struggle...The Church is that community that lives on the basis of the radical demands of the gospel by making the gospel message a social, economic and political reality.

The Church as a fellowship is a visible manifestation that the gospel is a reality. If the Church cannot be free, if it is a distorted representation of the irruption of God's Kingdom, if it lives according to the older order (as it usually has) then no one will believe its message.¹⁸

It is important that the Church not only proclaim to be, but in actuality is free to spread God's word. Today, it is becoming more and more important that all members take roles and actively incur their Christian duties. Participation by all members would give the minister the time to reach out into the community to teach, administer the sacraments, and provide the much needed pastoral functions in order that the role and discipline of the Church be carried from one household to the other. The Christian Church must be empowered and liberated. The ministry must be allowed to grow and reach out not only among Black people but all people. The Black Church communities have suffered severe causalities over the past two or more centuries, and the displacement of ministries will only increase the migration of members from one church to another. Major Jones in an article entitled "Black Theology and Its Relevancy" listed nine models that would enable the ministry of a Black Church to be effective:

There is the Revolutionary Model inherent within some of the more radical Black ministers who can see no hope in the present social structures. Their thinking would be represented in the introduction to the Black Manifesto of the 26th of April 1969, which was presented to the New York City Riverside Church on May 4th of the same year.

There is the AGENT of SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL. This model, more than a mere passive social prophet or one who even

¹⁸ Alvin J. Lindgren, *Foundation for Purposeful Church Administration* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1965), 60.

functions as responsible agent of change, is an activist in the first order. He is the civic-minded minister who serves on committees for the social betterment of the community. He is the "reasoned agent of change."

Beyond the responsible, passive agent of change is the PROTEST MODEL who is always ready to champion the cause of the oppressed, to point to areas of needed change; and where there is need, to act to demonstrate, by means of protest action, in the interest of needed improvements.

There is the POLITICAL ACTIVIST MODEL who seeks social change from the political arena, either by influencing elections of political leadership or by holding political office.

Unlike the above minister who may still be attached to a parish, the PROFESSIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS WORKER has made political action his career as a minister. Though ordained, he operates as a civil rights agent. Most often, he is in the employment of one of the civil rights organizations from which he derives a salary. He is a professional social activist, ready on call to give full-time as a change agent.

The TEACHER-PREACHER MODEL is the educator who may or may not be connected to an educational institution. He may be with some other type training institution that might seek to activate or educate people to social change.

There is the SOCIAL AGENCY TYPE who, feeling that the local church is a drag, takes a job in some social agency so as to work through it for meaningful change.

The BUREAUCRATIC MODEL is a person who does ministry through some board or agency of the Church feeling that this is where his larger contribution can be made to the human struggle.

There is the SPIRITUAL MODEL who merely carried on the traditional functions of the Church. He is concerned about change, but he contends that change is of God and that the Church is but the people of God. He sees the business of religion as being narrow in scope, having nothing to do with the social issues of our time. The social issues are left to God and to those beyond the Church.¹⁹

The Black Church must be about protest and revelation in order for changes to be made. We cannot be dormant and expect our white counterparts to bring about equality. In my own personal experience this has not happened. In history we have not experienced any change until after there was protest. Consequently Black theology cannot neglect to

¹⁹ James S. Gasden, *Experience, Struggles and Hopes of the Black Church* (Nashville, TN: Tiding Press, 1975), 19 – 20.

be about freeing the black people from the oppression of white traditional theology, which, when closely studied, permeates control and a loss of identity.

Black theology tries to establish and communicate God's power by helping the people maintain the objective and at the same time attempt to help the individual restrain from total bitterness that blacks are immersed in by the treatment of whites that profess to be Christians. Black theology must be an on-going experience of liberation, teaching and caring that God has not forsaken his people. I dare say that freedom and justice should be equated to religion, not even a folk religion, but as Preston N. Williams in his book *Black Church* states: "At the heart of Black religion is what is at the heart of every religion, a faith capable of giving meaning to the mysteries of life."²⁰

The human experience can reconcile and embrace in a continual healing cycle. The rhetorical and condescending actions that are reflective in the reconciliation process are the obstacles that lay between the Black/White theologies. The Christian experience according to the United Methodist Discipline states: "any particular personal experience of God's accepting love will affect one's total understanding of life and truth. This change and changing understanding, in turn will alter the believers' mindset and world view."²¹ There is a wide conception of truth between the various cultures, so much so that there is a distortion of God's truth. If we took our experience of suffering and that of Jesus Christ, then our personal faith as supported by the scripture of a suffering Lord will assure our confidence in the mercy and love of God. We just need to maintain our steadfast love in God regardless of the pain and suffering. Black Theology addresses this concept everyday

²⁰ Preston N. Williams, "Black Church," *Andover-Newton Quarterly* (November 1968).

²¹ Ibid., 80.

and gives assurance to its people through the scripture. In this respect, black theology, as George Casalis rightly states:

The basic relationship between the battle for the future of mankind and the Gospel which causes the battle and bears witness to it. From now on a theological ivory tower no longer is possible, only a praxis and a reflection which proves that one has taken sides in the planetary class struggle, the side of God for the liberation of all men who are victims of oppressive systems and profit-hungry men. Theology must ask each church, each Christian: On which side do you take your stand in the decisive struggle in the first, second, and third world.²²

Historical Foundations For The Ministry Focus

Historically, Yahweh revealed acts to lessen the oppression of an oppressed people, a people that had stood the test of time and stood defenseless against spiritual, economical, and a social power that was both relentless and ensued to maintain enslavement. Scripture tells us that regardless of the oppression, these people endeared their faith in God and were able to say;

I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and my song and he has become
My salvation; this is my God and I will praise him, my father's
God and I will exalt him. Exodus 15: 1 – 2 RSV.

Oppressed people came to know God as God intermingled in their activities of liberation, delivering them from suffering. God means more than just divine revelation, and self-disclosure. God's revelation is the totality of humanities emancipated from political, economic and social structures that enslave the oppressed in this society. This is the essence of biblical revelation. Biblical revelation testifies to God's events, the grace, and

²² George Casalis, "Die theologischen prioritäten des nächsten Jahrzehnts," *Theology Practica* (1971), 323.

judgments as God led the children from Egypt. This exodus even dramatized the power of God's revelation. Hearing the cries and groans of a people and after providing them with a way out of bondage, they were not left alone (although they felt there were times that God was absent). God, through grace, protected the people. God guided the people, laid hands on them so their plight would be guarded by whom He would send (Moses) to lead them from slavery. God's revelation is that of involvement in humanity. (Exodus 3: 7 – 8)

Theologians have made a distinction between God's revelation, general and special revelation. General revelation is viewed as coming to humankind and embodying in nature, experience or history, which would be knowledge of God independently from biblical revelation.

Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20 RSV)

Special revelation is embodied in Scripture of God with primary focus on Jesus Christ as being the creator. Special revelation is the central theme of a Christian theology, the showing that God has been made known throughout history and decisively in Jesus Christ. Gordon Kaufman writes:

To say God's act in Christ is revelatory, and Jesus is the Word of God, means that the event Jesus Christ was an occurrence in and through outspoken and then heard; here guide and communicated himself was sufficient effectiveness that man was enabled to appropriate the meaning and respond to it, his existence thus being radically for men.²³

The existence of the revealed God for Blacks, therefore, has to be perceived through the nature of being and the destruction of society. The moral attributes of God

²³ Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology; A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 7.

becomes a self-transformation for Blacks to evaluate themselves and to develop a new determination as to the existence of God and God's relationship with the oppressed.

Revelation affirms the constant attempt of creation to establish personhood for identity of individuals. Thus according to Bultmann:

There can be no revelation, which does not provide man with understanding of his own authenticity.

The meaning of revelation consist in its being the means whereby we achieve our authenticity, which we cannot achieve by our resources. Therefore, to know about revelation means to know about our own authenticity and at the same time, thereby to know our limitations.²⁴

Creating a partnership for black economic empowerment is the basic tenet of interconnectedness for church growth. Nehemiah understood that the revitalization of Jerusalem was not just replacing the walls and gates to keep out the enemies, but the essential aspect of interconnecting the construct of the community lives inwardly so that the walls would stand through eternity. This required a transformation of the mind, spirit, soul and heart of the people. It required that cultural diversity become an asset as opposed to being a liability. The church must understand that it is the gatekeeper (John 10:3). The role of the gatekeeper is to open the gate and allow people to come in regardless, each individual bringing tools for rebuilding. Once inside they are to be taught and challenged to step outside of their comfort zones. They must come to realize their brokenness and receive a prescription for healing (Luke 10:30-37; 17: 11-17), and it must be instilled into them the value of determination (Esther 2:58; 4:15 – 5:4; 7: 1-6).

Finally, economic and spiritual empowerment must start with the eternal focus of bringing people of diverse culture into believing and following the visions of the church.

²⁴ Rudolf Bultman, *Existence and Faith*, trans. by Schubert Ogden (New York: The World Publishing Co. 1960), 52, 92.

Economic power must be viewed not only in terms of money, but also in terms of a community working together in celebration of their commonalities that will give them liberating power.

The legacy of the black church is an understanding of its interconnectedness between the individual, church and community; religion and politics; the sacred and the secular. The Spirit permeates this interconnectedness of all life and things as stated in this following passage:

It was one of our early trips to Africa where we, visiting African Churches, were learning much of the traditional African faith and cherished cultural patterns. Friends had invited me to a small meeting house in a suburb of beautiful Durban (South Africa) perched on a hillside... They had asked me to speak... The room was fairly well filled, and one of the last to come in, who immediately caught my attention, was a lady of small dimensions... wrapped, rather than clad, in rags... One of the elders whispered, "She has walked ten miles this morning to get to church"... her picture was one of rags and tatters, of poverty... literally "clothed in need," and yet... occasionally she smiled a smile of spiritual strength. A young man came at her back. She whispered to him. A few minutes later, the young man put a wad of screwed up newspapers in my hand. On the margin of the paper was scrawled, "For the white Mfundisi"... the unfamiliar word meant Leader or Teacher. There was no written message inside... inside was an African coin about the size of a shilling, with its own message, a message, at the moment I could not read. The service was beginning.

...SHE did not rise... "How shall I thank her? What shall I say..." the benediction had been said... the service was over.

My benefactress was still hunched in her corner... Stooping to her, I put my hand in hers... I helped her as she moved slowly to the door where a few remaining members aided her. To the elders I brought my questions, "Why, why did she?"... "Why, why in her poverty did she give me the coin?"... She want to go to America with you"... "No, not in person but with the coin – or she sees herself going to America within the representation of that gift-coin. The coin is yours, but she expects you to be as generous as she is, and to give it to some person in your country, as needy as she is. The African as you know believes in Spirits." I was aware that as example of what he was saying, to the African the third person of the Trinity is far closer, more approachable, more reliable than to

the Western Christian. "The Spirit lives and moves and has its being" more vividly in Africa than in America."²⁵

The vision of Nehemiah was that the exiles return and build a community that would reflect the diversity of its people. This community would give birth to social, political, economic, and educational empowerment among Nehemiah's people. Biblical, theological, and historical research has confirmed that the church is the foundation of this work.

²⁵ Kenneth I. Brown, "Two African Coins: Two Moral Virtues" in *Common Ground*, ed. Samuel Lucius Grandy (Washington D.C.: Hoffman Press, 1976), ix-x.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This is a single stage, qualitative study. For the purpose of this paper, the methodological design employed three principle techniques designed to illuminate the original problem statement. These techniques helped the researcher to describe the nature and extent of communication problems that existed among members of the congregation. The techniques also helped to describe the extent to which the failures in communication hindered spiritual, psychological and economic growth among the congregation. The methods used were the focus group, the interview, and the survey.

The participants were self-selected. The study and the treatments were conducted from February 2002 through March 2003. Four focus group sessions were attended by a maximum of twenty people and were held during the spring and the fall of 2002. Standard sets of questions were raised at each session. Two interviewers conducted two sessions each. The researcher served as one of the interviewers. Participants represented the various cultural and national groups described earlier in this paper.

The interview was by far the most extensively used descriptive technique. This technique allowed the researcher to access information regarding language, customs, traditions, values systems, and expectations of the interviewees. More than fifty interviews were conducted during the year. The locations of the interviews included the church, private homes, local businesses, and worksites.

The interview questions helped to narrow this researcher's concept in an attempt to prepare the survey instrument. The interview questions were revised throughout the project as new insights emerged.¹

Group surveys were conducted among members of the congregation on two separate occasions. The accepted purpose for a survey is to allow the researcher to generalize his findings from a sample population to a larger population. As a result, inferences can be made regarding the attitudes or behaviors of the sample population regarding willingness to communicate with each other or the various barriers to communication and collaborative effort.² Written interview sheets were distributed after morning worship and sufficient time was given for the members to complete them. Respondents were given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions during the survey period. The survey period lasted less than an hour.

An effort was made to improve the validity and reliability of the survey and interview instruments before administration. A panel of "experts" reviewed the content survey.³ The experts represented the cultural diversity of the congregation. The criticisms shared were valuable and led the researcher to make revisions based on phraseology, definitions, and semantics. The potential for disrupted communication was greatly reduced as a result of the review conducted by these experts. Members of this committee

¹ John W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 57.

² Ibid., 117-18.

³ Ibid., 121.

were natives of Antigua, Ghana, Liberia, New York, North Carolina, Sierra Leone, and South Carolina.⁴

The resulting instrument was a twenty-two-item survey composed primarily of Likert-type items. Responses varied from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Several items asked for factual information in addition to attitude items. The questionnaire was administered to two other small groups prior to the large group administration.

Members of the congregation were invited to participate in the survey period, in order that they not feel pressured into participating. They were, therefore, self-selecting in the survey portion of the study. It is believed that stratification of the population was achieved for level of education, gender, age, and country of origin. Respondents participated on an anonymous basis. Two hundred fifty surveys were distributed. One hundred twenty surveys were returned.

Treatment Conditions'

Workshops, seminars, and Bible study sessions were held at the inception of the study period in an effort to establish a fuller understanding of community among members of the Westchester community.⁵ These treatments comprised the independent variables in the study. These treatments, to the researcher's satisfaction, created an improvement in communication and laid the groundwork for community building among members of the congregation. These treatments caused a change in the ability of members of the

⁴ Ibid., 119.

⁵ Ibid., 128. These treatment conditions were used in order to help create a basis for communication and community building among members of the congregation.

congregation to communicate more effectively with each other. Through discussion of the survey instrument it was discovered that educational levels in the British system were a major point of misunderstanding before the panel of experts reviewed the instrument. Definition of “immediate family” also needed a great deal of clarification. The African model is that anyone under the roof is the “immediate family.” Salary/ employment issue also became an issue for discussion as people are not readily willing to disclose this information for fear of how and why this information is to be used. Definition of marital status and leadership also differed and had to be clarified.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The establishment of this project has yielded substantial results. The problem was that there were impediments that prevented black spiritual empowerment. How can this be turned into an advantage. Surprisingly the process of change has gradually taken place through a series of workshops and experimental ventures of studies. The hypothesis is that by creating a learning and study atmosphere, cultural differences would be explored and addressed. Thereby commonalities would give way to establishing a relationship with the church and community.

A committee of church members aided in the design of a questionnaire. There was a 40% rate of return. It was learned through this questionnaire that many refused to answer questions pertaining to their education, income and leadership capabilities. The questionnaire showed that people do seek leadership roles in the church. They were willing to collaborate to accomplish a task. They were willing to start pitching in to get work done. It must be stated that this was not the case before this project was initiated.

During the project period a Monday night Bible study was started. One very important observation that was made: the majority of participants were women. Regardless how much encouragement was given the men would not attend. One of the results of this emphasis on the Word was a number of ministries were instituted. A book

ministry provided opportunity for all to read and be part of three different book discussions and/or participations periods. Once again the men did not participate.

However, during this project period and continuing from there is an increase in the number of persons taking part in the general ministry of the church. More adults are coming to church school that is being taught by a gentleman from Nigeria. A street evangelism ministry has developed. There are members who have begun visiting local group homes, ministering to troubled youth. Prayer groups and prayer partners are now active. In spite of what were at first cultural differences, members have signed up in an increasing number for the first time to be part of the ministry of the church.

The concept of giving has changed. The purpose of giving has progressed beyond the limit of raising money to meet the budget. Instead there is now a growing emphasis on tithing along with the supplemental 'Dollar-Day' project. People who have been long-term members of the church without demonstrating an understanding of Christian service are now modeling Christ culture and are intentional about service.

There are community projects on the agenda for the first time. Discussions in every area of the church to be intentioned and inclusive in all aspects of the church's ministry even to the point of how we use our hand and the indiscriminate and intentional wearing of dress. The church, on the weekend, has grown from a few persons involved into a place where there is little room left for programs. There is now a bookstore ministry not for profit but simply to provide a service to the congregation and person's stopping by during the week.

To provide a lasting and firm foundation for a more objective leadership team, as opposed to the culturally divided model that existed, the pastor, professional associates, laity in teams and individuals have embarked upon a 12-week study of a book by Frank

M.Reid, III, entitled *The Nehemiah Plan: Preparing the Church to Rebuild Broken Lives*.

This book encourages the congregants to look at their brokenness and seek methods to mend and develop as individuals and as a collective community.

From all of the workshops, church meeting sessions focused on the church diversity and spiritual empowerment. The recommendations that came from each of these gatherings were in question form: why has it taken so long to establish a real working relationship with a person we have known for years? Human behavior cannot be measured nor should it be judged. But it can be influenced when it is exposed to challenges.

This project has forced this congregation to begin redefining itself. To look not at what we are separately but what we can accomplish in a spirit of oneness.

The project has provided the essential groundwork for beginning an economic and spiritual journey under the banner of Christ-centered thinking. We dare not stop the wheel now. The members are putting in place ministries of investments insurance, especially for a segment of our congregation who in the past culturally and traditionally relied on relatives, friends and the community to take on the burying of the dead. This might seem small but the congregation has experienced first hand how devastating it can be. So small steps are being implemented.

The Trustees and the Church Treasurer are implementing plans to substantially invest and endorse the church to stave off potential financial ruins.

Through this project the pastor has been able to hear and share the vision for a model of visionary ministry. This pastor is delegating more each week and a new level of trust is emerging between the pastor and the congregation.

Westchester United Methodist is becoming a church for study in transforming cultural differences into a model for ministry. The new attitude of the leadership no longer

looks inside itself and its borders for training and visions. It has made plans for visitors to come in and provides a place for housing. It is making plans to travel beyond its borders and be part of other communities. This model cannot and must not be micro-managed by the pastor. This model must be utilized by the entire community.

Larry Bird Workshop

Preliminary Remarks: WUMC Congregational Leadership Development Planning Session

How long has this vision been in embryonic stages?

From the Pastor's perspective, why does the vision need to be reevaluated?

Do we recognize that the strength of the church is related to the number of people who participate in the planning and execution of the vision?

The Church does not belong to the minister but to the ministers who help create the church environment. Does this statement encapsulate our values and beliefs?

Today is the beginning of our reexamination of efforts to find out what new pathways need to be initiated.

Today is our opportunity to invite you to involve yourselves in the execution of the effort.

Is our work at the grass-roots level a cohesive and coordinated effort in ministry? Is this what we desire?

What is our purpose here at Westchester United Methodist Church?

What prevents us from accomplishing our goals and our desire to create effective ministries?

How do we connect vision to living faith?

How do we make disciples for Jesus Christ?

Who do we want to be?

Who should we be?

If you were to ask a passerby or a member of the community what we do as a church, what would they say we're about?

If this church were to disappear, who would miss it?

How close are we to the definition of "servant leadership"?

How do we handle change and difference? We've always done it this way, this is the way it is OR do we remember the Pharisees!

Triad Session I – Take two minutes each to discuss your strengths and look at the history of your life calculating the number of years you've been doing this wonderful work. Record the responses on the newsprint. What does your group bring to the table as a collective group?

Evaluation – What did you do all day there at church? What was the goal? Did you accomplish the goal? What's the proof? Why did we need this guy to come in?

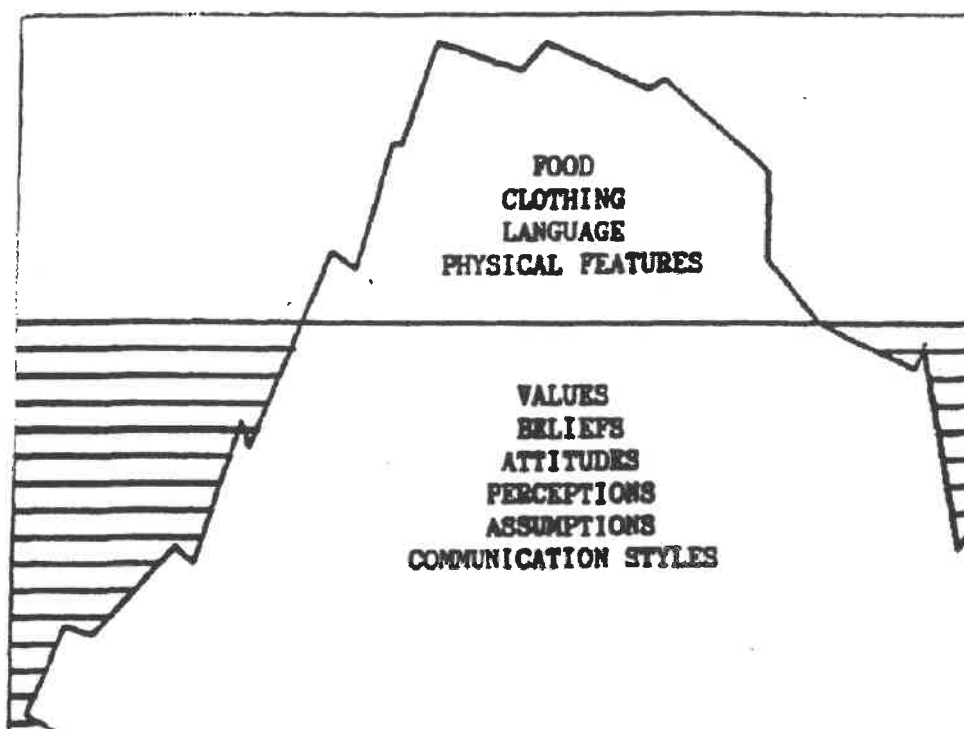
Die Process (What needs to be diminished, improved or eliminated?) – What were we doing that we wanted to change? What were we attempting to remedy? So what do we do with the stuff we have accumulated? So What? Match competencies to community needs/cluster concerns.

Roadblocks to effective communication – Definition: A roadblock is:

Judging: - criticizing, name-calling, diagnosing, praising evaluatively

Sending Solutions – ordering, threatening, moralizing, excessive or inappropriate questions, advising

Avoiding other's concerns – diverting, logical argument, reassuring



Questions for Reflection:

Why does God have WUMC in this place?

What does God expect us to do here?

What is the best time to do it?

Who are the most important people to work with?

What is the most important thing to do at all times?

Discussion: Service Opportunities Inventory for this community. There is no shortage!

Bible Studies

1. Miracles of Jesus - Study Series - October 7, 2002
Who is He and what is He to you?

I ask for the grace to know Jesus intimately, to love him more intensely, and so to follow him more closely. @ (St. Ignatius of Loyola)

Lesson #1 - The Wedding Feast

John 2: 1 - 12

EXAMINE

Read the text 2 or 3 times. Circle words that grab your attention. Examine the flow of the text. Identify the setting and the characters.

What is the book of John about?

Why is this story placed in the beginning of John's Gospel?

Why is wine important to this story?

This miracle takes place in Cana of Galilee. Cana is interpreted as a place of reeds[@]. What does the presence of reeds indicate in the climate of the Near East?

ENTER

Place yourself at the party as the host. How do you feel now that the wine has run out?

You are a guest at this party how do you feel now that the wine has run out. What would you be over in the corner saying? ...but Jesus is there.

Who is Jesus, for you, before the miracle and after the miracle?

If you were Mary, how do you feel about this?

Read verses 3 - 5

Some weddings at that time lasted as long as a week. What would happen to the party if the wine ran out and how might this be interpreted?

Read verses 6 - 9

Respond as a servant who has witnessed and been a part of this miracle.

Interpret verse John 2:11 and its meaning

EVALUATE

What could the significance possibly be? Why six waterpots?

How might the Lord be using the waterpots in your life? These pots were used in the ancient Near East to wash body parts. Interpret for yourself.

Consider the harvesting of grapes.

Wine was an important and valuable trade commodity (2 Chron 2:10,15) The king was not only owner of vineyards, and a producer of wine (Zech 14: 10) but also as palace records on ostraca found at Samaria show, received both wine and oil from landowners' taxes.

At harvest, grapes were placed in baskets and carried to the winepress. Here the fruit was placed in the larger upper basin (which may have been cut from solid rock) and pressed by treading, accompanied by joyful shouts (Is 16: 10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33). The juice flowed down into a lower container, where fermentation probably began. The juice remained

there at least overnight to settle. A second pressing was made from the skins, which was kept separate and produced a distinct sort of wine.

The fermenting wine was placed in jars and stored (as fermentation continued) in caves or underground cisterns. When fermentation ended the hole was sealed and the seal marked the type and quality of the wine or its owner, as for example at Gibeon, an important wine-making center where a number of sealed or inscribed jar handles were discovered.

Read Genesis 1:31 - 2:2
 1 Corinthians 11: 24 - 25
 John 19: 34
 Joel 2: 24
 Acts 2:13

AIDS TO DISCERNMENT

In the coming week:
 Review the Lord's miracles in your life
 In the life of your children
 In the life of your spouse

Consider how all the participants were part of the miracle.
 What does this mean for the Westchester family; for your family?
 Selah
 How is the Lord's love demonstrated to us in this miracle?
 Selah

Read Psalm 136 and then write 10 verses of your own Psalm of Praise

Further Resources:
 Luke 7: 36 - 50
 John 2: 1- 12
 Philippians 2: 1 - 13
 John 2: 13 - 25
 Mark 9: 14 – 29

2. WESTCHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH The Miracles of Jesus Study Series October 14, 2002

"I ask for the grace to know Jesus intimately, to love him more intensely, and so to follow him more closely."

Lesson #2 A Man Born Blind
 John 9. 1-45

EXAMINE

Read the text 2 or 3 times. Circle words that grab your attention, examine the flow of the text, and identify the setting and the characters.

Jesus passed by and He “saw.”

“I AM the light of the world.” I reveal, I disclose, I AM the Revelation; “blessed art thou Simon Barjonah...” Matthew 16.7

Neighbors

Begged asked earnestly

Jesus “made clay.” (Violation of Sabbath regulations for observant Jews)

“Go was in the pool called Sent.”

Parents Matthew 10:33

Worship (v.38) What is the foundation of true worship in this text?

Wash - There are three usages in New Testament baptizo, nipto (cleanse), and breecho (pour down like rain).

ENTER:

Consider this miracle from the blind man’s perspective. Feel what he might have felt.

- A How did he ‘see’ Jesus?
- B How do you think he ‘saw’ the neighbors? How did they see him?
- C How do you think he ‘saw’ his interrogators? How did they see him?
- D And what about the parents? (v.18)

EVALUATE:

1. How can an individual’s personal relationship with the Lord Jesus disrupt families? How are compromises worked out? Should compromises be worked out? Begin reading at Matthew 10.32 and hear God speaking to you this week as you read.
2. Evaluate the blind man’s faith. How does it compare to yours?
3. Read all of Matthew 10. What is God saying to you?

Whom do you really see? As the people of God, whom do we really see?

When Jesus saw Luke 5:27

Luke 13: 12

Luke 19: 5

Matthew 9:22

Matthew 14:4

We see

Matthew 14:2

Read the story of the Good Samaritan Luke 10.

How do we see? How does Jesus see?

What does it take for you to really “see”?

4. Concrete: we are, we need, He gives! Are you from Missouri Selah!!!
5. Doing good deeds for Jesus was more important than observing the man-made rules observed by the religious rulers. How do we exclude folks from the community of faith by applying and observing our own rules? As individuals; as church family Discuss. Do we glorify God rather than the rules of men?
6. Consider Romans 8:28 in relation to this chapter. Respond to situation in your own life.
7. How does this miracle attest to the fact that Jesus is indeed God?
8. This book was written around 90 C.E. What was the historical context?
9. The two miracles we’ve studied are found only in John’s Gospel. Can you offer an explanation?
10. This Gospel allows the reader to estimate the length of the Master’s earthly ministry (about 3.5 years) by identifying three different Passover celebrations. John 2: 23, 6:4 and 11:55.

3. WESTCHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Miracles of Jesus - Study Series - October 21, 2002
Who is He and what is He to you?

I ask for the grace to know Jesus intimately, to love him more intensely, and so to follow him more closely. @

(St. Ignatius of Loyola)

Lesson #3 – Lazarus Is Raised From The Dead

John 11: 1 - 44

EXAMINE

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Why is this story placed in the beginning of John’s Gospel?

Why is wine important to this story?

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Selah

How is the Lord's love demonstrated to us in this miracle?

Selah

Read Psalm 136 and then write 10 verses of your own Psalm of Praise

Further Resources:

Luke 7: 36 - 50

John 2: 1- 12

Philippians 2: 1 - 13

John 2: 13 - 25

Mark 9: 14 – 29

4. WESTCHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
 The Miracles of Jesus Study Series
 October 28, 2002

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but
 now I'm found. Was blind but now I see!”

Lesson #4 The Woman With the Issue of Blood Mark 5.21-43

Mark

John

Phew!

Ox

Servant

Doctrinal

Eagle

Son of God Glory and Divinity

EXAMINE

- | | | |
|-----|-------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | v. 21 | The other side of what? |
| 2. | v. 22 | ruler of the synagogue |
| 3. | v. 23 | daughter |
| 4. | v. 23 | lay hands on her |
| 5. | v. 25 | blood |
| 6. | v. 26 | suffered because of the physicians |
| 7. | v. 27 | heard |
| 8. | v. 27 | she touched Jesus |
| 9. | v. 30 | “Who touched Me?” |
| 10. | v. 33 | fearing |
| 11. | v. 33 | truth |
| 12. | v. 34 | faith |
| 13. | v. 34 | daughter |

ENTER

The woman was unaccompanied

The woman had no protectors. Women are usually identified through men

The woman was bleeding and therefore unclean. Refer to Leviticus 15.25-30

The woman touched the Teacher without permission!

This woman had spent all her money. She must have had money at some time

She trusted physicians. They caused her to suffer.

She was isolated from the cult, from worship, from relationship.

She probably held a “shamed” status. Her condition has caused her to be dishonored. She was socially dead.

What are some other instances of social death? What is God calling us to see?

TOUCHING JESUS WAS A VIOLATION OF ACCEPTED SOCIAL CODES AND RELIGIOUS LAWS.

Her touching another person would render them ritually unclean until the evening.

EVALUATE

WHAT MADE THIS WOMAN WELL?

What is this “fear and trembling?”

Which do you engage? Faith or fear?

What is your “issue?”

What is the blood set-up? Look at this account through “resurrection eyes”

View your situation through “resurrection” eyes.

Jesus brings us back in. “Daughter”

1. Holy has been extended to include a lot more?
2. The Sabbath is now for people not people for the Sabbath.
3. Jesus re-defines "holiness."
4. Those who were out are now in.
5. You can't make Jesus unclean, He makes you clean!

5. WESTCHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
The Miracles of Jesus Study Series
November 11, 2002

"I ask for the grace to know Jesus intimately, to love him more intensely, and so to follow him more closely."

Lesson #5 Walking on Water

EXAMINE

1. Examine the possibilities for the disciples and all that may have happened between v. 23 and v. 25.
2. In v. 24 they were in the midst of the sea, about 2.5 miles from shore.
3. Read Matt 13:54. What was Jesus "own country?" He told the disciples to cross the lake and head toward Bethsaida but "the wind was contrary." What should have happened to the boat then?
4. In v. 25 we're told that Jesus appeared in the "fourth watch." This is about 3am. How long had the disciples struggled with the wind? (Jews divided the night into 3 watches while the Romans divided it into four.
5. The disciples were terrified in v. 26. why should terror overtake them when they see the image of a man approaching?
6. What was Jesus reminding the disciples of when He spoke in v. 27? Give a scriptural reference.
7. Be Peter! Look at v. 29 and v. 30.
8. Where is the WOW in v. 31-32
9. How does v.32 speak to your own life situation and challenges?
10. You've been in the ship witnessing this whole drama. Describe your emotions in v. 33.
11. Look at v.34. Locate Gennesaret on your map.

ENTER

1. How did Jesus' presence, at first, affect the storm?
2. How about that Peter?
3. Jesus walked on the water! Ancient thought attributed this ability to gods alone.

4. Consider Peter's words, "If it is You Lord..." Any scripture parallels here?
5. If you had enough faith, you could walk on water! What is the implication of such a statement?

EVALUATE

Scholars believe that these gospel accounts were written by members of distinct Christian communities for the purpose of encouraging them in the faith and to teach important faith lessons. What type of lesson do you think the writer of this gospel may have been attempting to transmit in this story?

1. What is the Lord Jesus asking you to discover about yourself in this story?
2. What is the Lord Jesus asking us to see about our church communities?
3. Where do the angers lie?
4. Who is in the boat?
5. Where do we "see" faith in our community?
6. The disciples traveled from the Jewish side to the Gentile side of the lake. Why is this important?
7. When we come to worship, we sit in the church nave. The word derived from the Latin *navis* which means "boat" or "ship." Where is this ship going?
8. If this is an account of church life, how might the chaos of storms threaten a congregation? A family?

6. Westchester United Methodist Church
The Miracles of Jesus Study Series
November 18, 2002

"Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling O sinner, come home. Come home, come home, ye who are weary, come home; earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling O sinner, come home."

Lesson #7-Jesus Cleanses the Ten Lepers
Luke 17.11-19

EXAMINE

1. v. 11 Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem and passes through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.
2. v. 12 He met ten lepers which stood afar off.
3. v. 13 Explore the "recognition factor."
4. v. 14 Explore the possibility of
"and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And He saw them."
"And He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests"
Refer to Lev 14.2-3; Num 5.2; Lev 22.4

5. v. 14 As they went, they were healed. Refer to II Kings 7.3-10. WOW!
6. v. 15-16 What is true worship?
7. v. 16 He was a Samaritan! Refer to Acts 1.8; Jn 4. Worshipping the right God in the wrong way. Rival worship (Mt. Gerizim, Sanbalat, Nehemiah, Manassah, 322BC).

ENTER

1. excluded
2. polluted
3. deluded
4. included!

EVALUATE

1. Discuss this passage with your group from the perspective of:
 - a. the believer
 - b. the church
2. How can this passage be used to encourage, evangelize and empower others?
3. Consider Rembrandt's Prodigal Son.

The Nehemiah Plan

This is a 12-week study brought to the church in the hopes of achieving Wholeness of the Body and of the Spirit. At the end of this session we should be ready to move on to greatness and an empowerment to be realized not on in Westchester but in the Community at Large. Attendees will also receive a certificate of Study, the beginning of a new thing as this Church moves on to not on the Preaching but the Teaching and the doing of the Word of God.

FIRST STEPS

Come clean – confess

Emperor's New Clothes

How are you?

Admit there is a problem

My role in the problem

What am I willing to do?

COMMIT

THEM

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Exile from what | _____ |
| 2. Comfortable as individuals | _____ |
| 3. Nation dissolved in the natural
not the spiritual | _____ |
| 4. Skill available | _____ |
| 5. Diluted worship | _____ |
| 6. Loss of Focus | _____ |
| 7. Getting Over Getting By | _____ |
| 8. Broken-ness | _____ |
| 9. Moral and Spiritual weakness | _____ |

Nehemiah 1.1

1. Who was Nehemiah?
2. Which round of returning exiles did he lead – Year?
3. Who led the first round?
4. What stimulated Nehemiah's compassion?
5. What was Nehemiah's immediate response?
6. What was the first phase of his prayer?
7. What/who are you compassionate towards?
8. Compassion – Examine your own

Covenant – Who are you prepared to keep covenant with in addressing a need?

Confessional – What hinders your service – Be real!

9. How true have you been to God and His service?

Which commandment have you violated?

What's the remedy?

10. Write a few terms down – Free associate with the word ‘Servant’

Broken ness – Healing Begins With Me

- ## 1. Definition of Broken ness
- Any attitude, situations that constrains, restricts, opposes

2. Where does it come from

3. What are my areas
Trust, disappointment, living out a bad choice
betrayal, need for recognition
humiliation, exhaustion

- #### 4. How is it played out in me

- ## 5. Life Graph

- ## 6. Discussion

Chapter 2

Philippians 2: 1-11

Ephesians 2:10

James 2: 14 - 16

1. What was Nehemiah sacrificing by leaving Babylon?

List some of the consequences of the move

List some possible consequences involved in you making a radical change for Jesus Christ

2. What made Nehemiah think he was the guy for the job?
3. Deconstruct 2.8 what are the implications?

What resources are available to you?

4. Discuss the following scenario: You are at 2547 East Tremont Ave. to find a pile of smoldering rubble where once stood WUMC. How would you feel?
5. What stands in the way of your radical service
personal/attitude material/resources

v. 13 makes a very fine point that's a really important preliminary step as you assess your own spiritual condition what do you see?

6. v. 17 – 18 explain what happened in this verse.
7. Where does opposition come from in you own life – in the church?
My life church life
8. List 5 killer attitude statements that oppose God's progress

Let this mind: Phil 3:12, Phil 2:5, Romans 12:16

Westchester United Methodist Church
The Nehemiah Plan Bible Study
February 3, 2003

Lesson #3/ Chapter 3

1. How can you focus/ mobilize resources in solving a problem?

Personal resources

Church resources

Community resources

2. Who participated in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem? List 5 Groups/Families
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
3. What attitudes might have disrupted the work? Look at verse 5
4. What argument might that Goldsmith have offered in not participating?
5. What do you think the attitudes of by-standers might have been?
6. What about v. 12
7. How would you interpret v.14 – Share some implications for some of our personal issues;
for areas of work in the church
8. What does this chapter teach us about assignments?
9. What do we learn about apparent ‘qualifications’?
10. How do you see your own qualifications for work in ministry?
11. How many gates did Jerusalem have?
12. What is significance of gates anyhow??? Look at II Chronicles 23.19. It is believed that Jesus entered Jerusalem through the Sheep Gate. What is the implication?
13. Chapter 4.1. What **must** you expect when you begin to do the work God has called you to do?

14. What types of attacks does the scripture suggest we need to expect?

15. What must the response be?? V.9

16. How often do we pray our way through a problem as a church family?

Monday, February 24, 2003 7:00 P.M. Workshop
Preparing the Church to Rebuild B-R-O-K-E-N Lives

Workshop Facilitator:
Rev. Karen Jones-Bernstine

Workshop Description and Goals|

This workshop begins a series of teaching and learning opportunities designed specifically for the WESTCHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH located in the Bronx, New York.

Using as a primary resource, *The Nehemiah Plan: Preparing the Church to Rebuild Broken Lives*, by Frank M. Reid, III the goals of this workshop are:

- to enlighten the congregation as it continues to do the work of ministry through rebuilding.
- to encourage the congregation to be intentional in addressing brokenness in the lives of it's members, institutions, and larger communities;
- to especially equip the leadership of the congregation with the necessary tools to effectively facilitate the work of rebuilding.

Some key questions to consider:

How is brokenness defined? What does it look like? What are some illustrations?

What does it take to rebuild? What are some of the "tools" that are needed?

Who should be a part of the process of rebuilding?

What stands in the way of rebuilding? Do you anticipate any opposition? What do you do about opposition?

How do you know when the broken has bee rebuilt? In what ways do you measure or assess when the rebuilding is completed?

17- Then I said to them, "you see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.

18 - I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start building." So they began this good work.

Nehemiah 2: 17-18, NIV

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together.

--Vesta M. Kelly --

Westchester United Methodist Church
Review on a Class on Nehemiah
Rebuilding of the Church: Purpose of the Church
By: Rev. Dr. Samuel Q.E. Gharthey

March 17, 2003

The class consisted of about 22 ladies and two men. All participants were about 40 years and older. The participation of the members of the class was free, enthusiastic and displayed clearly a willingness of the members of the class to learn. Above all the fellowship shared in the class, the class demonstrated one of openness to each other.

The class started with a review of the previous chapter in the book, *Nehemiah, Rebuilding the Church on the Nehemiah Plan*.

In order to bring the class to clearer understanding of where we needed to go in that class, two maps were distributed to each member of the class. One map was that of the Ancient Near East copied from the Bible and the other was a Map of Africa. Since all of the class members were people of African descent, it was important for them to understand that all of us have been, and are part of the history in the Holy Scriptures - The Bible. The maps also demonstrated that we were dealing with the real issues of past enslavement of the Jews by the Persians. The Jews in exile were therefore no different from us, as people taken out of our homelands and brought into strange and different cultures.

Our cultures had changed, our names had been taken, therefore our history was gone. With the language and thus the heritage lost, all we had become were a people hanging on “Hope.” Such experiences had encouraged brokenness in the church rather than building us up together. If, therefore, the Church was to be rebuilt, then it would have to start from within ourselves, since we are the church. Thus the question to be answered by each of us was simply this “What is the purpose of the church?” It was here that the participation of the class members started:

Bro. James:

Reverend, it seems we can never get together to do things. We talk about fellowship but we never can fellowship and work with each other.

Pastor:

I believe it is the “I” syndrome. We love to protect ourselves from each other. The need to live for each other is basic principle. Even more important still, let's look at two passages of scripture – Acts 2:41-47, and I Cor. 1:0-13. Divisions have no place in the Church when “the Lord adds to the Church such as being saved.” Those being added to the number of the church, have already repented, confessed their sins, and have received forgiveness so they have nothing to hide. Thus they do not have any ego to protect.

Sister John:

So Reverend, how can we really come together and do things together and rebuild?

Reverend:

We may first look at the purpose of the Church as Paul states in Ephesians 4:11-

13.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world;

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

The passage teaches us simply that we are all given different gifts so that together we can use those gifts to build the Church – the body of Christ. Some are hands, some are feet, some are eyes, some are ears, and so on. This means we just know our gifts. So my question to you is will each one tell us what spiritual gift he or she has?

Sister John:

How do I know my gift?

Reverend:

The desire to study the Scriptures.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: I Peter 2:1-2

When we spend time in study of the Scripture and prayer, our fellowship grows with the Lord Jesus Christ and so with each other. When this happens, we will not want to hide anything from anyone. We are then the Church but it must start with repentance.

With this, we prayed and departed, each promising to study I Cor. 12 in order to find his or her gift.

Conclusion:

I discovered that as different people of different cultures came together, studying the Holy Scriptures, praying and interacting with each other, they never saw themselves as people of different cultures. At the feet of Christ Jesus, Our Lord, our problems were the same and our joys were the same as each other's. As the members of the class fixed their eyes and minds on the Lord Jesus, no one seemed to have the time to worry about each other's culture. The participants were one, which confirms Paul's assertion of the oneness in Christ. Gal. 3:25-28

But now that faith has come
We are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all
sons (and daughters)
Of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into
Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is
neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are
all one in Christ Jesus. (KJV)

Testimonials of Participants

"What an uplifting, fulfilling experience I had during Bible Study at Westchester United Methodist Church. Women and men coming from many parts of the world, seeking a time for fellowship with other like minded seekers of spiritual growth. The musical praise services before and after classes allowed me to know that I was not alone with God. *'He restores my soul'*.

As a member of another church in Charlotte, North Carolina for over fifty years, this experience with people that I have just met was fulfilling to say the least. My age allowed me to refer to most of the Bible class members as children and grandchildren but there was a spiritual connection that brought us all together as one. It further brought to my mind that the prayers we render must be a part of the work that we are searching for. God is everywhere and that has made a difference in my life.

In gratitude, I affirm that I am the picture of self-confidence because God's spirit shines brightly within me. Thank you Westchester for providing the faith and confidence that I

needed through your God- given insight and faithful bible study. My new declared motto is '*Cast your burdens on the Lord and he will sustain you*'. " Psalm 55:15 (Adelaide Hunt)

The bible study class at WUMC has contributed to my spiritual journey. I joined because of the relationship I was developing with God and my need to know the bible and understand that relationship. The class helps me to study and interpret the written word. I am aided with stories and illustrations that relates to everyday living.

It has helped me to understand the importance of studying the word, fasting, and building a closer relationship with God. It has changed my outlook towards my fellow man. It has shown me the importance of living a life using the examples that Jesus has laid out for me. It has shown me the importance of giving back some of what God has provided for me. (Genevere David)

Nehemiah Study Testimonials

When I was asked to write a summary of the Nehemiah Study, Isaiah 52:5 came to mind: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our inequities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed."

At the onset, when the study was advertised, I had reservations about being a part of this study. I prayed about it. I missed the first lesson and then decided I would attend the next session. I went with a non-chalant attitude. I had read the book and re-read the book of Nehemiah. The first session I attended gave me a sense of calmness. Rev. White was a driving force of my change, emphasizing the fact that God is the source of our Vision.

As I attended each session, week after week, repentance became real and eminent. A change of attitude was inevitable. The leaders who participated in the study gave us incite into God's challenge to us in the task of rebuilding the Church. This task takes humbleness, joy, organization of resources, spiritual development, reading, studying, and understanding God's word.

By praying, having faith, and having the Holy Sprit within, you will receive the power for revival to rebuild and strengthen broken lives and the members of the community.

As for me, as Paul said in Ephesians, I will take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, praying always and allowing God to guide me at all times. (Marjorie Maynard)

Under the directorship of Rev. Johnny R. Johnson, I attended two workshops at Westchester United Methodist Church that was presented by Mr. Larry Bird. At the workshop held January 25-27, 2002, and titled The Church as a Resource Center, we were given organization tools, briefs on leadership training and taught how to coordinate events and programs and how to validate relationships with our fellow members.

On March 1-2, 2002, a workshop entitled Action Plan was held. This was a group of people coming together to discuss our goals as disciples to identify the need of the church and our community.

During the month of March, 2003, our Bible Study Group embarked on an extensive study of the Book of Nehemiah. Rev. Michelle White, along with special guests, led us. This study was enriching, empowering and masterful.

In all, I have been richly nourished with the spiritual education that I have received.
(Mearle Evans)

The Nehemiah Plan Testimony Preparing the Church to Rebuild Broken Lives

“Praise the Lord, give God some praise. Hallelujah.” This is the greeting of each meeting session. The worship, praise, and testimony time prepare you for the receiving of the Word in a teach, learn, and interact forum.

Guest speakers and teachers, Rev. Berstine, Rev. Davidson, Rev. Gharney, made focused presentations on Nehemiah (Ezra) paralleling Old Testament and the Twenty-First Century. The more situations and people change, the more they are the same.

Clarity was given to the scriptures through geographic maps and Jewish history and well as through the Temple builders and re-instructing the Law and touching on a few Hebrew words. Visual aid was presented in a video film “A New Thing” Strengthening the African American Church representing twenty-five United Methodist Churches.

The Nehemiah Session has been, and continues to be, a blessing. So much was gleaned during this time. Rebuilding came in many forms, it came in the form of the healing of the body, mind, and spirit. Tangible blessings were manifested during these sessions when Christians were obedient to the will of God in tithing. Peace, joy, and love abound because the Spirit of the Lord truly was in our sessions.

Commitments were made to go into the community to share the Word of the Living God. The people have a mind to work. Pray without ceasing for we have a Combative Spirituality – prayer and acting. A new thing, nevertheless, a feeling of I am with God.

This has been a joyful experience for me, particularly at this time when rebuilding is so necessary for closure. I thank God for all His earthly angels. (Beatrice Franklin)

The Nehemiah Plan Testimony Bible Study – Nehemiah/Ezra

The purpose of the Nehemiah plan is to move us from the brokenness to boldness in God. Nehemiah had love for himself, his religion, and his people.

God's plan for Nehemiah was a strategy for rebuilding, restoring, reviving, and resurrection of His people. God's plan for Nehemiah to rebuild the city of Jerusalem required him to seek and receive the strength to rebuild.

In order for us, as present day Christians, to rebuild, we must start from within ourselves through confession, commitment, worship, praise, and faith to go forth on God's Word. No one will be able to stand up against you. He will not forsake you or leave you alone. Throughout the Word in the text we are reassured of God's continual mercy, forgiveness, and faithfulness.

The purpose of the Church is to preach, teach, and bring the word of God into reality, to be bold and to build up our fellowship and relationship with one another. This, in turn, can be taken into the community.

The vision of the Church is to meet the needs of the congregation. It is to take whatever skills/talents we may have and use them to the Glory of God. This is the mind to work, mobilizing to manifest our mission – Rise up and Rebuild. (Beatrice Franklin)

Going to church regularly and reading the Bible is the norm for church members. One would think, by today's standards, that it is all you need to do to be a good Christian. But, this is far from the truth. Reading the Bible without an explanation of the message that the Scriptures are sending can leave one at a loss. This is the purpose of Bible Study: the explanation of the Bible Scriptures when it was written and how it relates to our lives today. Without Bible Study, one would think of the Bible contents as only in the Biblical era. Through Bible Study, I have learned what God has planned for the world, given to the world, and what is still to come. I can now relate what is happening in the world today with what is written in the Bible, starting with Genesis and Exodus and then other chapters of the Bible.

One specific Bible chapter that was done as a special study was Nehemiah. The Nehemiah study was an ongoing study that affected the study group dramatically. I think it has made a great impact on WUMC. This study covered many factors in the influencing of the building of the church.

1. Sharing – giving back to God from what he has given you.
2. Outreach – going out and bringing new people/members into the church.
3. Cultural Fellowship – Learning about and respecting the different cultures and diversities in the Church.

Cultural fellowship is extremely important at WUMC. This church has a widely diverse cultural membership. Cultural diversity tends to hinder the atmosphere and growth of the church. Unless church members learn about each other's cultures, they cannot really get to know each other as people or as Christians. Unless the church's cultural barriers are broken, the church will be a tower of Babel.

WUMC is addressing cultural fellowship. Some of the things I now know:

1. We may be from different parts of the world, but as black people, our cultures are basically the same since all of our cultures originated from Africa.
2. The attire of different cultures has specific reasons and depict specific tribes.
3. The way you greet people, i.e., shaking of hands, is specific by culture.
4. The way people grieve is specific to their culture, i.e., widow covers her face, folds her hands and remains silent.

Enhancement makes the church more appealing to retain the current members and attract new members.

At the close of the Nehemiah studies, the attendees were asked what ministry they would like to do in the Church. I was amazed at the ministerial requests that were made, and from people who previously had just attended church without any ministries:

1. Outreach
2. Participating in Church Services
3. Usher
4. Aiding the sick and shut-ins
5. Just help in any way they can.

The Nehemiah study has shown the church that the members can maintain their identities and work together in faith.

Most importantly, the Nehemiah study has sown the seed for greater works in my life and the life of the Church and has established the needs of the church.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

When old members or visitors enter Westchester United Methodist Church today they are faced with a few obvious questions and observances. What happened, is this church the same church of a year or even six months ago? The attitude and spirit have changed. More members are active in the life of the church. There are persons working around the church each day with a glow that can give answers to questions, and if they do not have the answers they will offer to get it or find someone who might have the answer. They are involved in the day-to-day life of the ministry of the church.

At the inception of this project the writer had a great deal of ambivalence. The expectations were that there would be reluctance and minimal participation. Reflecting on other projects of the past this would be one in a long list of other failed attempts to establish within the minds of the people that we are all God's children regardless of our culture or differences. This journey, however, has shattered many of these doubts. It is difficult for me not to refer to Ecclesiastes 3:1 "To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens" (KJV). There are some lessons I have learned from this project.

This experience provided opportunities for God's spirit, creativity and vision to manifest itself into actions that have restored the life of this congregation. When the

manifestations of God are realized, many members in this one body begin to understand that ministries are beginning to form.

Working in a multi-cultural ministry, one of the lessons eventually learned is that the only difference among us is the various paths we have to take to get to this one place. The second is the amount of time it takes for people to realize that cultures and languages are our safety zone. This safety zone renders us powerless for we put up invisible walls that are used to keep others at a distance. The church must be an awesome place that dares to break the walls and be what God calls it to be.

The researcher has observed that, by the actions of a few at this time and the gleam in the eyes of many, 'God is doing a new thing.' The things of the past are fading away. Multicultural ministry then, is not some future phenomenon. It is part of our culture. It must be forced and challenged, it has to be addressed with sensitivity and intention, and most of all rise from a scriptural foundation.

The church leaders must reflect the rainbow culture of the congregation involved. Failure to be intentional in this challenge would allow for the people to know that the church is only giving lip service when saying we are one inclusive church, the Body of Christ. The various cultural voices must be in the mix of all decisions and implementations.

The researcher has experienced many who have participated regularly in the focus group bible studies, and face-to-face discussions have broadened their visions. When this process began, (let it be clear this project has been and is an ongoing process), the cultural human behavior was very closed (ethnocentric). After one of our focus group discussions a member came up to me and said "I have been in this church for all these years and I didn't know that certain persons were from my home country and we know some of the same people". We are part of a larger context, but the church needs to be the advocate

that opens the windows and doors so that the people will look out and walk through. We must acknowledge each others' identities and cultures and respond to them, as we are one people. When we look at the life of Jesus, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and others, their messages were that all of us are pieces of a quilt that is held together by a single thread. The sewer of these pieces, the maker of the quilt, is God.

This project does not provide answers to all the many questions that are being asked or should be asked. It surely provides, however, a few viable strategies that can be adopted for congregations to study - particularly those who are seriously committed to multicultural ministry and the solidification of the economic and spiritual power of its church and community.

Total commitment to cultural diversity will liberate the church and community and will free the congregation to be "Box Crushers." Comfort zones become the wilderness experience that will consume the vision of the entire church. Language is essential and plays a vital part in the model. Cultural terminology frequently will dictate how people will respond to terms and their interpretation and misinterpretations. The terms "immediate family" creates a stumbling block for a segment of the congregation. It was discovered that "secondary school" carried a different meaning for some. Language is important and it must be clear and inclusive.

Gestures are important; the use of certain items such as red writing pens or handing items to another person with your left hand can be interpreted as a sign of ultimate disrespect. You do not write a persons name in red ink, unless you are a person in position of expressed authority as it is a sign of death.

It has been said before but it bears repeating that bringing about understanding, working partnerships and empowerment in a culturally diverse congregation and

community is a very, very slow process. There are no known instruments that can give you an accurate measurement. The only barometers that will be reliable are the attitudinal changes and growing commitment of the people, as they voluntarily get involved in the life of the church.

The crucial reality: this is only a chapter and model, as we face the new paradigm of cultural diversity creating partnership for Black Church economic and spiritual empowerment. The liberation of the vision in this context has begun, but there are many miles to travel spiritually, educationally, socially and politically before the Black Church and Community can harness the economic power necessary to make a difference.

In retrospect, this researcher approached the task believing that the implementation of an economic empowerment scheme depended merely on mediating or controlling cultural dissonance. Cultural difference can be a problem when no attempt is made on the part of the congregants to collaborate with each other. The variables that can contribute to dissonance at Westchester are myriad.

The challenge is therefore to bring the cultures together in Christ Jesus through collaborative efforts and joint experiences as a new paradigm is created. When the culture of Jesus Christ becomes the dominant culture, cultural dissonance is greatly minimized. To discuss any type of development independent of the shared understanding that Jesus Christ provides is counterproductive.

The intent of this project was to develop a model for a ministry aimed at cultural diversity: creating partners for Black Church economic and spiritual empowerment. The economic facets were not accomplished or addressed within the normal term of economics, neither was spiritual empowerment. This was due to the prevailing aura of the

group or clique ethnocentrism, meaning that each group or clique lived in its own tower of Babel and an invisible and inseparable wall encompassed their culture.

It is possible to focus on the familiar but not fully understand the “Bible.”

Approaching economic and spiritual empowerment in this manner allowed for discussions of faith, self-esteem, confidence, brokenness, and most of all, stepping out of one’s own comfort zone to look for new paradigms for life’s journey.

In the final analysis, this researcher has discovered that the walls of ethnocentricity must first crumble before any steps may be taken towards the path leading to economic empowerment.

APPENDIX A

HISTORY

HISTORY OF WEST CHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The West Chester Township was bounded on the north by East Chester, east and by East Chester Bay, south by East River and west by the Bronx. The Dutch West India Company originally purchased West Chester from the Mohegan Sachems and other Indians who claimed it in 1640.

On November 14, 1654, Thomas Pell of Fairfield, Connecticut, obtained a second grant from the aboriginal proprietors of the town. Twenty years later, the Sachems, Maminepoe and Wampage conveying to the inhabitants of West Chester "all the track of land lying on the east side of Bronckses River." The principal Indian settlements in this town were located on Castle Hill near Bear Swamp. The former is said to have been the site of an Indian castle.

On November 5, 1654, the English settlers had begun to put in an appearance in West Chester. Records tell us "Whereas a few English beginning a settlement at no great distance from our outposts, on lands long since bought and paid for, near Vredeland, an interdict was ordered sent to them by the Council and Director-General of New Netherland, asking them not to proceed further and commanding them to leave the spot. One of the very first acts of the English colonist was to nail to a prominent tree, the arms of the Parliament of England. Soon afterwards the English dwelling there were firm in allegiance to the Dutch rule, although they were practicing the English form of worship.

On May 3, 1697, at a meeting of the freeholders and inhabitants of the town and precincts of West Chester, they voted and agreed that there should be a Town House built to keep courts in and for public worship of God. A new Parish Church was built in 1700 and a rate was levied on all the inhabitants, without exception, towards defraying the expenses. This building stood on the site of the present St. Peter's Church, which was at the time the Town Green, adjoining the old County Court House and jail.

In 1702, Rev. John Bartow, who was the first regularly inducted Rector of the Parish arrived. Rev. Bartow's letter on August 14, 1706, to the Secretary stated, "My great business is to plant the Church of England amongst prejudiced, poor and irreligious people, who are more apt to receive than to give, who think it a hardship to pay their dues; and we dare not use the law for fear of bringing an odium on the Church.

In town records of West Chester, we find under the date of May 6, 1729, regulations for government of "sheep pasture" which had been granted to the town by charter of February 21, 1721. The freeholders of the town were entitled to free pasturage for 25 sheep for each individual. The "sheep pasture" or "commons" as it was later called, embraced about four hundred acres on the west side of West Chester Creek, together with a fenced-in piece of 1 ½ acres on Stony Brook, where the owner were in the habit of feeding and washing their sheep. In 1825, the trustees of the town sold the commons as undivided lands belonging to the town. The land passed into several hands and in 1851 to a building association that established the village of Unionport.

The earliest mention of Methodism in Westchester is found in the diary of Joseph Pilmoor. He recorded that in April 1770 he preached "at Newtown, Harlem, West Chester and elsewhere in the providence of New York." Again, on June 22, 1770, he went "in compliance without a pressing invitation to preach at West Chester." On this trip, he rode by horseback on a "calm and pleasant morning" through "the fields adorned with grass and flowers and the valleys thick with corn." He preached in the "Court House" and found great liberty as he was entertained by the Bartow family. Pilmoor preached at West Chester again on July 15, 1771 "To a small but genteel congregation," from the text, "Blessed are the people that know a joyful sound." Laymen in the village kept the fires of religious worship burning. Ministers traveling continuously would visit as many little societies as possible. Fortunate indeed were the towns located close together. They could expect more frequent visits of the circuit riders.

Another distinguished leader to visit West Chester Village was the first Bishop Reverend Francis Asbury. John Wesley sent him to the colonies. Asbury writes in his famous journal, "I went to the new world. What to do? To gain honor? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No, I am going to live to God, and to bring others so to do." On November 24, 1771, he wrote, "I went with Brother Sause and my Brother White to West Chester, which is about twenty miles from New York. My friend waited on the Mayor for use of the courthouse, which was readily granted. On the Lord's morning, a considerable company being gathered together, I stood up in the Lord's power, yea I felt the Holy One was nigh. In the evening I preached at a place called West Farms, to many persons on the Love of God. The next day I preached at West Chester again to a large company, and felt a sense of God resting on my heart, and much love to the people." Asbury referred to other frequent visits to West Chester, East Chester, Kingsbridge and New Rochelle.

On October 6, 1808, the congregation, consisting of 51 members, (forty seven white and four black persons), of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Town of West Chester, met in the pursuance of the act to provide for the incorporation of religious societies passed on March 27, 1801, and elected Trustees. A parcel of land was given by the Trustees of the Village of the "common land" to the Methodist Trustees to be used a Methodist meeting place and burial ground. This is the plot now used on the street once called West Farms Road, later changed to Walker Avenue and now East Tremont Avenue. A small one-room edifice was erected in 1818, and was first known as "Methodist Episcopal Church of Zion." The church was reincorporated on October 26, 1826, but it does not seem to have flourished as the church corporation was dissolved by reason of "nonuser." A second re-incorporation was effected on February 7, 1833. When the congregation assembled in the edifice used by them for divine worship, they resolved that the Society in the future would be called The Methodist Episcopal Church of Zion in the Town of Westchester.

It is interesting to note here that a charter was granted to a group of Masons by the Grand Lodge for a "Lodge at Westchester," in Westchester County, to be called the Wyoming Lodge No. 492.

There were twenty-one members of this Masonic group meeting in The Village of Westchester when the charter was granted. M.W. – J. Edward Simons, Grand Master, assisted by his official staff, installed the officers in exercises held on June 8, 1860 in the Westchester Methodist Episcopal Church on Walker Avenue. There were present, 257 brethren representing fifteen different lodges, at this ceremony.

A few years later, in 1863, our country was divided in the Civil War and many parishioners were called to duty. After the end of the war, people were returning to their churches.

The growth of the Society necessitated expansion, so in 1867 a room was added to the rear, the front was enlarged with added room for a pulpit and choir, and a tower was built. The cold, simple one-room Church was transformed into a “cozy” Church with the interior arched, largely through the efforts of Justice Samuel R. Munn. Further change took place in 1898 when the straight high-backed pews were replaced by opera chairs. A pipe organ, given by Mitchel Valentine, was then installed and a chancel built. Sparks from the burning Morris Park Racetrack on the first Sunday of the Reverend A. L. Faust’s Pastorate destroyed the steeple on April 10, 1910. As a result of the fire, the Church was condemned as unsuitable for public worship.

Determined to rebuild, action was taken in 1912, and ground broken on March 12, 1913. With the completion of the “Basement Church”, the members continued to be a vital part of community life.

In October 1923, the Church proudly opened up a “Baby Welfare Station” that was a vital service to the community as the health care of all infants and young children brought to the Station were met.

In 1939, while the Reverend Wayne White was pastor, he negotiated with the City of New York and succeeded in having the restrictive “reversion clause” deleted from the original deed. Since a loan could now be negotiated with a bank, the congregation, with a renewed vigor, made plans to build a new church on top of the basement, which was still structurally sound.

The year 1939 also saw the name of the church being changed due to the unification of three branches of Methodism; The Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church. The union of these three churches covered over eighty-two percent of American Methodists who were united in one church. By 1950, the Methodist Church had a membership of nearly nine million people in the United States, its territories, and Cuba with approximately one million in overseas missions.

It was not until after World War II that the Methodist Church was able to build a new structure in the Village of Westchester. And, it was a glorious day for the faithful congregation when the new beautiful red brick building was dedicated in 1949.

It was a tribute to the Reverend Wayne White, under whose pastorate this building evolved into a reality. Although he was there for only a year after it was dedicated, he had the keen satisfaction of a beautiful place of worship having been built to the glory of God.

There was obtained from the Old Methodist Church in Tribes Hill, New York a 600-pound bell that was placed in the new church steeple in 1949. When donated, the bell was 102 years old. Also, as a remembrance of the church's past, a number of the old headstones from the burial yard are embedded in the parking lot wall of the new church.

In the pastorate of the Reverend H. Hobbs, an education wing was added to the building in 1965, and then known as the Day Care Center.

In 1972, under the leadership of the Reverend Hobbs a larger space was required, and a whole new Day Care Center was built. It was called the Westchester-Tremont Day Care Center. The Center serves Westchester's working mothers under the directorship of Mrs. Ruth Daniels. The Center is open from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. The children range in ages from preschoolers, ages three to five, until entrance into the first grade. A further addition to the building was made in 1973, and the day care program expanded.

Until the late 1950's, there had always been a few black families attending Westchester. One black family of note was the parents of Stokely Carmichael, the Black Activist of the 50's and 60's. During the tumultuous day of the 50's Stokely Carmichael's membership in the church acted as a focal point of controversy. The church was largely scandalized by his call for "Black Power," which made the road into the civil rights movement a rocky one. By 1981, the congregation was predominately black, with only one elderly white member.

According to a paper written by Mr. David Hay, Lay Leader, a very active member of the church, and who after some years after the death of his wife and another member of the church who's husband died many years past, (Mr. Hay, white and Mrs. Sybil, black from Jamaica), wrote this paper titled; "A Word About Its People." The church was strongly influenced by two pastors from 1938 – 1958, namely, the Reverend Wayne White and the Reverend Nils Jansen. White began his pastorate in 1938. The church was housed in the basement, or undercroft of the original foundation, built in 1913. White made a strong impact on the youth, and at least one of them, John S. Wood, entered the ministry of the conference. White encouraged his parishioners to give social, or community expression to their faith. He was strongly influenced by the social Gospel movement and Walter Rauschenbusch.

When Parkchester was built in 1939, it was an all-white community. During the war period, White was involved in an attempt to move a black family into the development. When the facts of the effort became known, it created a furor in the church. White was labeled a communist, among other things. White's social activism led to his eventual removal from the church, but not before he had succeeded in building a foundation over the existing foundation.

At the time of the fire on April 10, 1910, and in the decision to rebuild the church, the construction did not cover the entire basement. So under the Reverend White's leadership, the church completed building its covering over the rest of the basement, which is the site of the current building.

The Reverend Nils Jansen, a man of Norwegian background, came to the church in 1951. Jansen was much more conservative, and saw his pastorate as an attempt to "put out the fires" started by his predecessor. His seven-year pastorate was built on enlarging the all-white congregation along traditional Methodist lines. The people of God were to live in love and harmony with each other, and with the world around them. God was in His heaven and Dwight Eisenhower was in the White House. The war would soon be over in Korea, and all was right with the world. This atmosphere prevailed until the appointment of the Reverend Henry Hobbs in 1958. In his comments, the church had strong leadership, but for eight years we tried to find ways to be a more community focused church. St. Raymond's Roman Catholic Church located five blocks from us, dominated the religious environment.

In 1966, a capital campaign to build an educational wing was launched. With its success, the remaining half of the basement was covered in 1968. That process moved the church in the direction of creating a "community" day care center. Much of the church was aware that its survival could not depend on a dwindling white congregation. The church was by no means united in reaching out to so different a constituency, but the opposition could think of no acceptable alternative.

By the late 1960's, Parkchester had become integrated. A few younger members of the Church had participated in the "Parkchester Fair Housing Committee," and in ecumenical Metropolitan Urban Service Training (MUST) project. The expansion of the day care center in 1972 positioned the church squarely as an advocate for change.

Over the past 20 years, each minister has brought different dimensions to the life and growth of the church, and each made his only unique focus in different areas. Under one administration the music ministry was the focal point of ministry, no doubt due to the fact that he himself was a musician. The choirs were strong; however, other areas of ministry were neglected. There was not much outreach or growth.

The shift to moved to the youth, under the new pastor, for he was a teacher before entering the ministry. As a result, the youth ministry grew and the youth of the community became involved the church. A baseball team and basketball team was formed; this brought the community and church together. They union was short-lived because the pastor was appointed elsewhere.

Words from Mrs. Sybil Hay, who has been a member of this church for over 20 years: "Then came the awareness of cultural diversity-out of many, one people now seem to be the theme. Attention was paid to differences in forms of worship-our church now moved into the celebration of Thanksgiving in a new way. We saw children marching to the altar bearing their baskets of goodies, all worshipping God with the fruits of our lips and the labors of our hands. Banana and coconut plants touched each other, oranges and

coconuts and mangoes all added richness to the altar and the large duck bread was an ornament to the altar. The West Indian method of Thanksgiving became incorporated into the church service and each island was given the opportunity not only to share their national anthem but also to give a brief history of the island.

Not to be outdone, the Africans in their majestic robes demonstrated the spirit of giving as they danced to the altar to the tune or toe tapping, body waving music, bringing their offering as in the Old Testament, giving joyously to the God from whom all blessings flow.

Culturally, the church membership is comprised of persons from over 18 Caribbean countries, eight African countries, mixed in all of this you have persons born in the South, Midwest and New York, coming together in this place to praise God.”

According to Mrs. Hay, outreach was not as far reaching as could be expected, but first there had to be healing on the inside before proceeding to minister to others on the outside. With each change of ministry and each new approach, there was expected resistance to change and it took time to get everyone on one accord. Today, however, we are seeing the bridge of the gap along with greater participation and dedication in service. Of prime importance is the Nursing Home Ministry, which has advanced from a small start has now grown into a great outreach ministry. Our disaster relief methods have reached out to nations all over the world with clothing, books, food, finance, and particularly the setting up a Scholarship Fund for students in Tanzania. This is, of course, in addition to the over fifteen students we are assisting from our own church congregation.

Because of the citizenship status of many of the members, we are not as active in politics as we should be, but there are members of the congregation who holds office.

Economically, our church has grown and is giving in spontaneous and regular ways. Long gone are the days of the chicken dinners and tea parties to fund the church's programs. This is now done through tithes, offerings, and the introduction of the “One-Dollar-A-Day-Project.” As a result of this, our church is becoming economically strong, and we are able to assist needy members and others seeking assistance. These are words from a twenty-year member of Westchester.

Presently, the church has a membership of over 385 members, the majority of who live six to twelve blocks from the church. We purchased a new van in 1995, but we had no commitment from the congregation for a permanent driver; therefore, the van sits 98% of the time under the shed. A little over three years ago, the congregation decided to start an 8:00 A.M. service in addition to the 11:00 A.M. service, and this change has given new life to worship.

There have been cosmetic changes made to the front of the church, prompting many persons passing by to ask: “Is the church under new management?” The front of the church was landscaped with old hedges in trees and other shrubbery that totally defaced the church. There was a sign hanging from a pole, but it is faded and no one could see, from either direction, the face of the church. Today, there's a beautiful sign that lights up

at night with a black background and white lettering. The shrubbery has been replaced with beautiful "Boxwoods." The church can be seen coming from all directions now.

These peripheral changes to the exterior were needed to make the church look receptive and inviting for those desiring to visit. However, it has not produced regular attendance at Bible study, the desire to become economically self-sufficient, or the development of a long-range outreach program. There's very little to no leadership within the church where needed to become and maintain the active ministry necessary for the survival of this church.

There are over 39,000 persons living in the housing complex where members of this congregation live. There is one hospital, two schools one public and one Roman Catholic, two car dealerships, one owned by Dick Gidron (Black and one owned by ... White), enormous storefronts, but only one is owned and operated by a person of color. This is in a thirty-five to forty block radius of the church. Westchester owns no property but the parsonage, which is in a white neighborhood, located one block behind the church. The location of the church and its membership is located in different political districts and none of the politicians are of color.

Finally, the church suffers from lack of strong leadership. The majority of the members enjoy, without guilt, sitting in their pews each Sunday and when the benediction is given rush out to go home and not return until next Sunday. There is a sad but true commentary to the reality to the work of this church and it was stated in a recent meeting, "If this church closed its doors today, who would miss it with the exception of the people that attend it each Sunday?" Someone said after a few moments, "No one."

The Methodist Episcopal Society of the Town of Westchester

1800 – A few Methodists, before 1800, prayed and worked for a Church and organization of "the people called Methodists." They gathered together in a fellowship and occasionally had a visiting preacher.

1807 – An old document in the New York Public Library give the names of white and black members of the Society of Westchester Village.

1808 – The society was regularly organized into an independent church, without a building or plot of land.

1809 – First incorporated under the name: The Zion Methodist Episcopal Church of the town of Westchester. When the Bronx merged into the City of New York, the rights and interests of old Westchester went to New York, including a "reverter right" if our property was not used for religious reasons. This seems to have been an ordinary proceeding in the early times, but few churches have had to work as long and hard as our to obtain the release of this right. But at last this had to be done.

1818 – A one-room church was built

1833 – Second re-incorporation under the name: The Methodist Episcopal Church of Zion in the Town of Westchester

1867 – The one room was enlarged to the above building

1893 – The name was changed to the Westchester Methodist Episcopal Church

1910 – A fire destroyed the steeple and the edifice was declared unusable as a church and was demolished

1913 – The foundation or basement of what was to be a new church edifice was built but not due to the lack of funds, construction ended. There was enough money available only to roof over the basement and use it as a temporary Church

1939 – The name was changed to Westchester United Methodist Church

1949 – A new beautiful red brick building was erected

1968 – The name was changed to the Westchester United Methodist Church. To its congregation it was known as “The Basement Church.” But, those in the community who joked about it knew it as the “The Eelpout Church”

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MINISTERS OF WESTCHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SINCE 1900

Rev. Edwin Kirby	1900 – 1901	Rev. Earl Heck	1930 - 1937
Rev. W. Griffin	1901 – 1903	Rev. C. Gray	1937 - 1938
Rev. M. Griffin	1903 – 1905	Rev. Wayne White	1938 - 1950
Rev. R. S. Povey	1905 – 1907	Rev. Nils Jansen	1950 - 1958
Rev. J. Snaveley	1907 – 1910	Rev. Henry Hobbs	1958 - 1977
Rev. A. Faust	1910 – 1914	Rev. Michael Dash	1977 - 1979
Rev. W. Gilles	1914 – 1915	Rev. Gloster Current	1979 - 1983
Rev. G.A. Viets	1915 – 1916	Rev. Nathaniel Grady	1983 - 1984
Rev. A. Faust	1916 – 1928	Rev. Marion Mitchell	1984 - 1993
Rev. H. Benedict	1928 – 1929	Rev. Johnny Johnson	1993 -
Rev. H. Trinkhaus	1929 - 1930		

APPENDIX B
MEMBERS' VOICES

As a member of this church for over 20 years, having been ministered to by 4 different pastors, I think I am eminently qualified to give an overview of the spiritual life as it at present stands.

Each Minister brought a different dimension to the life and growth of the church and each made his focus in different areas. Under one administration the music ministry was the focal point of interest no doubt due to the fact that the Pastor was himself, a musician and naturally this was his greatest field of interest. The choirs were strong, and the musical enrichment of the church was at its peak. However, other areas were neglected. There was not much outreach or growth.

The shift then moved to youth, and the youth ministry was of prime importance, as the then Pastor was himself a teacher at some stage, and naturally this became an area of major concern. The youth group drew the interest of youth in the community. The forming of a baseball and basketball team saw us enter competition, and while we did not bring home the proverbial 'bacon', it was good to see the youth in their church colors representing our church. This was a new venture and one that would not only involve the church, but the community.

Then came the awareness of cultural diversity – out of many, one people seems now to be the theme. Attention was paid to the differences in forms of Worship – and our church now moved into the celebration of Thanksgiving in a new way. We saw children marching to the altar bearing their baskets of goodies, all worshipping God with the fruits of our lips and the labor of our hands. Bananas and coconut plants touched each other, oranges, coconuts and mangoes all added richness to the altar and the large duck bread was an adornment to the altar. How thrilling to hear the songs of thanksgiving, reminiscent of the days of the Pilgrims giving thanks for a good harvest. This West Indian method of Thanksgiving became incorporated into the church service at Thanksgiving, and each island was given the opportunity not only to share their national anthem but also to give a brief history of the island.

Not to be outdone, the Africans in their majestic robes demonstrated the spirit of giving as they danced to the altar to the tune of toe tapping, body waving music, bringing their offering as in The Old Testament, giving joyously to the God from whom all blessings flow.

Culturally we were at a new high, and everyone aware of the rich culture of each other and better able to appreciate and understand where we were coming from, and to work together with one common good – to praise and glorify God.

Outreach was not as far reaching as could be expected, but first there has to be a healing on the inside before proceeding to minister to others on the outside. With each change of ministry and each new approach, there was the expected resistance to change, and it takes time to get everyone on one accord. Today, however, we are seeing the bridging of the gap and with greater participation and dedication in service.

Of prime importance is the Nursing Home Ministry, which from a small start has now grown into a great ministry outreach. Mostly communion is given to these patients and a bi- weekly visit to the home is of great meaning to these inmates many of whom have no other visits from anyone. Gift boxes are prepared for Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter and many lives have been transformed due to the area of ministry.

Some of the groups have annual visits to their island home, and have been very influential in having meaningful changes made both socially and politically. While this is not per se a church effort, there is much member participation and involvement.

Our disaster relief methods have reached out to nations all over the world in giving clothing and foodstuff as the need arises.

We have also involved the hospitals in the area, and occasionally seminars are conducted as hospital teams visit to check blood pressure and to give talks hypertension and other areas of interest.

Politically: While not directly politically involved members holding office or running for office are invited to give talks regularly on the political situation existing in the area and of special areas of concern.

Members are also assisted in filing their tax paper, and special group meetings held to assist in this area.

There is today much greater ministry participation. With the church van available, it is possible to attend meeting at the other churches and to share ideas and concerns. One such meeting was recently conducted for lay speakers and other areas of service, and much knowledge is gained from this interchange of ideas.

Seminars on "money" have helped members to be better money managers and youth involvement in every area of ministry is encouraged.

Economically, our church has grown, and giving is spontaneous and regular. Long gone are the days of the chicken dinner and tea parties to fund the church's program, but through the giving of gifts, tithes, offerings and the introduction of A Dollar A Day Program, our church has become economically strong, and able to assist needy members and others seeking assistance.

The introduction of two services each Sunday has facilitated greater attendance from a community level as members who could not attend due to job involvement, now find it possible to participate in one or the other of these services.

Today, we are a church on the move. We have not arrived, but we are getting there and making an impact politically, socially and economically. Our Black College Fund involvement has enabled and assisted needy students to attend College, and we are able for the first time to award 7 scholarships to deserving students. Care packages are also prepared occasionally to further assist them and to encourage them to know that their progress is being followed.

Our Women's and Men's groups also play a vital role in attracting young men and women to participate and our regular prayer breakfast meeting have brought in groups together in a oneness that is contagious.

Rome was not built in a day, but step-by-step we are marching into the future – a church ready and able to impact the lives of others in the community.

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An African will say that a child can get anything from anybody through respect and obedience. Respect will earn you great things in life. Blessings will always be yours. This is the first thing a child will learn from his older generation in the family. There are 28 tribes in Liberia and each member has his own dialect except that you are a member of the same tribe, you cannot communicate with any member – languages spoken in Liberia are Bassa, Via, Kpell, Mandingo, Gio, etc. English is spoken in the society as the official language in the country.

When our parents have guest any child who would want something from his parents will wait until the guest leaves before a child can ask his parent for what he/she wants. We also use “talking drum” understood by the tribe in the interior of the country. A child can communicate with his parents just by the look of the child.

Liberian is an open society. We welcome foreigners and treat them better than ourselves. We have what we call open door society. Everybody is welcome. We usually make anybody welcome in our home.

One must always address an older person by calling his last name and not by his first name. Rev. Johnson not Johnny.

The family is always together. We do not send out our children to be on their own just because the child has reached the age of 18 years. The young generation takes care of the old generation. We consider it to be “pay back time.” Your parents take care of you when you are young. You do the same for them.

We do not close our doors to eat. There should always be food for someone who comes in hungry to eat. We always share among ourselves what we have if one has food everybody will benefit.

Men are always the head of the family no matter what happens.

Our history is not written but passed on from one generation to another. We can tell one tribe from another by their dress. Bassa tribes like to cook and wash clothes as their living. Via people like to obtain higher education – MBA/PhD. Gio people like to sing and dance. Mandingo people like to wear long white gown and white slipper

Among the countries of Africa, you will find certain things to be the same but done differently among the people. Respect, obedience, etc. will be found at home.

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE

WESTCHESTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
COMMUNITY BUILDING QUESTIONNAIRE

**PLEASE DO NOT GIVE YOUR NAME OR ANY IDENTIFYING
 INFORMATION ON THIS FORM!**

Where were you born?

- a. American South _____
- b. American North _____
- c. Africa _____
- d. Caribbean _____

Please indicate the specific country of birth. _____

What is your present age? _____

Is your family (husband/wife, children) here in this country with you?

YES _____ NO _____

Are there other members of your family in you country of origin?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you have dependent children living with you?

YES _____ NO _____

What are their ages? _____

Are you responsible for the financial support of family members in your country of origin?

YES _____ NO _____

How many years have you been in the United States?

One to five years

Six to ten years

Eleven to twenty years

Twenty plus years

How many year have you been attending Westchester United Methodist Church?

- a. One to five years
- b. Six to ten years
- c. Eleven to twenty years
- d. Twenty plus years

What is your marital status?

- a. Single
- b. Widowed
- c. Divorced
- d. Married

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Primary
Secondary
Undergraduate
Post-Graduate
Vocational

What is your employment status?

Employed
Self-employed
Unemployed and looking
Unemployed and not looking

Are you now or have you in the past worked multiple jobs at the same time?

Currently working more than one job
Have worked more that one in the past
Am currently working three jobs
Other (explain)

Does your job prevent you from attending regular worship?

I can't attend Sunday Worship regularly
I can't attend Wednesday night Bible Study regularly
I can neither attend Sunday nor Wednesday Worship regularly

What is your level of income?

Less than \$20,000

\$21,000 - \$35,000

\$36,000 - \$50,000

More than \$50,000 per year

Do you own your home or apartment in the United States?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you own a home in another country?

YES _____ NO _____

Have you ever started your own business?

YES _____ NO _____

Have you ever been a partner in a business?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you wish to start your own business?

YES _____ NO _____

PLEASE USE THE SCALE TO INDICATE YOUR ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Agree strongly

Agree somewhat

No opinion

Disagree

Disagree strongly

I am a capable leader _____

If I were in a leadership position, I would function capably _____

Do you agree, disagree etc., that the following issues effect your willingness to serve in a leadership role here at Westchester United Methodist Church?

Jealousy _____

Cultural differences _____

Cliques _____

Laziness _____

Procrastination _____

Fear of Criticism _____

Tolerance _____

Respect _____

I am hindered by:

I lack strong communication skills _____

I lack self-motivation _____

I lack self-confidence _____

I lack dedication _____

I lack commitment _____

I lack knowledge and preparation _____

The lack of confidentiality in the church _____

The lack of effort among the members _____

A lack of clarity of purpose in this church _____

A lack of faith among members _____

Un-Christian-like behavior among members _____

APPENDIX D
MEMBERSHIP CHART

NAME	PLACE OF ORIGIN
Elroy Hodge	Tortola BVI
Cheryl Weeks	Manhattan, NY
Everett Liburd	Basseterre, St. Kitts
Christina James	Liberia
Rence Christy	Bronx, NY
Majorie Maynard	Jamaica, WI
Petula - Denunes	Guyana
Tiffany Ragbeer	Guyana
Barbara Morgan	Florida
Cleveland Morgan	Georgia
Yvonne Davis	Jamaica
Dian Prass	Guyana
Wilfred Walters	St. Kitts
Barbara Jones	Manhattan
Greta Blyden	St. Thomas
Samuel Shaw	St. John's WI
Terreance Saunders	Jamaica, WI
Emmanuel Amoah	Ghana
Geraldine Smith	Jamaica
Elaine Carter	Jamaica
Andrea West	Jamaica

Linda Dawn	Jamaica
Perkins McFarlane	Jamaica
Mrs. Olabisi	Nigeria
Ethelene Metzger	Sierre Leone
Clarence Dawson	Tontola, BVI
Mrs. Dawson	Tontola, BVI
Gwen Akingba	Sierre Leone
Agnes Adeniyi	Nigeria
Lydia Francisco	Philippines
Geraldine Leggett	New York
Oki Olayinka	Nigeria
Catherine Dick	Trinidad
Joseph Myer, Sr	Liberia
John Torain	Virginia
Christopher Adeniyi	Nigeria
Aderonke Adeniyi	Bronx
Genevere David	St. Thomas
Esther Holder	Barbados
Mary Blessit	Jamaica
Selma Torain	Virginia
Adelaide Hunt	North Carolina
Sonja Johnson	North Carolina
Manulita Lettsome	St. Thomas
Theresa Hardaway	USA
Marilyn Hinds	USA

Tonia Tyson	USA
Ardella Adegbo	USA
Marie Connor	St. Thomas
Ernest Liburd	St. Kitts
Sonja Rock	Panama
Inez Cleary	Jamaica
Ama Odum	Ghana
Thelma Reid	Jamaica
Rose Shaw	Montserrat, WI
Beverly Fairweather	Jamaica
Kofi Appram	Ghana
Estina Bryan	Jamaica
Shevon Lawrence	USA
Jordon Webb	USA
Natasha Nurse	USA
Chloris Dockery	Jamaica
Victoria Jacobs	USA
Olive Smith	Jamaica
Thelma Fahie	Tortola, BVI
Amy Boyd	St. Thomas
Terrence Saunders	Jamaica
Petronella Satish	St. Kitts
Zadie Salmon	Jamaica
Tiffany Ragbert	Guyana
Adresta Appram	Ghana

Paulette Hamilton	Jamaica
Francis Wright	Jamaica
Juliet Wright	Jamaica
Audrey Draisin	Tortola, VI
Cora Doram	Antigua, WI
Sophia O'Loughlin	Montserrat, WI
Karleen Brown	Jamaica
James Ifill	Panama
Mark McCook	USA
Carlton Creary	Jamaica
Comfort Myer	Liberia
Stephen McHayle	USA
Aida McHayle	USA
Cornelia Cooper	Georgia
Alice Kindell	Alabama
Phillip McCook	USA
Sybil Hay	Jamaica
Thelma Cherry	Florida
Beverly Farmer	USA
Beatrice Franklin	USA
Kwame Amakwah	Ghana
Eldra Petrus	St. Thomas, VI
Sarah Alleyne	North Carolina
Frances Evans	South Carolina
Joshua Olabisi	Nigeria

Juliana K. Mamsah	Ghana
Elaine Ward	Antigua
Azali Ward	USA
Cora Dunbar	Jamaica
Carmen Hamilton	Jamaica
Geraldine Brooks	Montserrat
Samuel Pascua	Philippines
Toya Browne	St. Martin
Linda Loggins	Jamaica
Vanessa Hill	USA
Blake Hill	Jamaica
Jacques Jean Gilles	Haiti
M.K. Amanlewood	Ghana

APPENDIX E
DEMOGRAPHICS

Prepared For:
Percept
Zip Code 10401
Bronx, NY

View 2002
Based on Census 2000 Data

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
Zip Code 10401

Percept

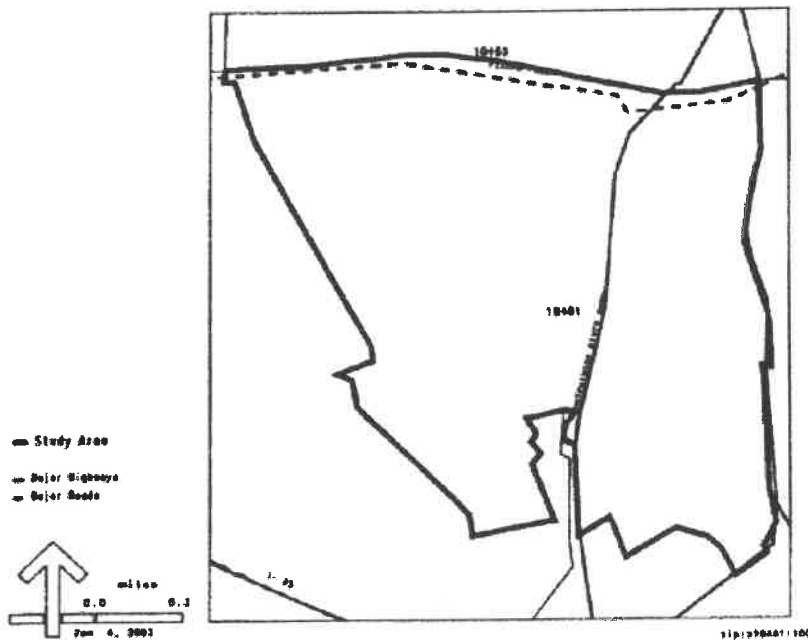
People and Place ... pgs 2 & 4

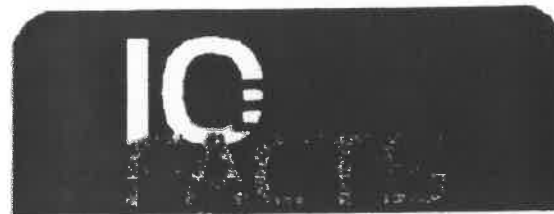
... pgs 3 & 5

... pgs 2 & 4

Faith Preferences ... pgs 3 & 6

Study Area with Zip Codes





About the people in
10461 - Bronx, NY

BASED ON 2000 CENSUS DATA

		10461	U.S.
1	Current Population	50,414	284 mil.
2	Projected 5 Year Population Change	3.0%	4.3%
3	Largest Lifestyles Group	Ethnic & Urban Diversity	Middle American Families
4	Non-Anglo Population	40%	30%
5	Fastest Growing Racial/Ethnic Group*	Asians	Asians
6	Households with No Faith Involvement	42%	35%
7	Average Age	41.9	36.7
8	Average Household Income	\$48,925	\$61,904
9	Single Parent Households	25%	26%
10	College Graduates	15%	20%

 Percept

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Sources: Percept, Claritas/NOI, Census Bureau (v01b1) * group must be at least 0.5%

View 2002
Population Census 2000 Data

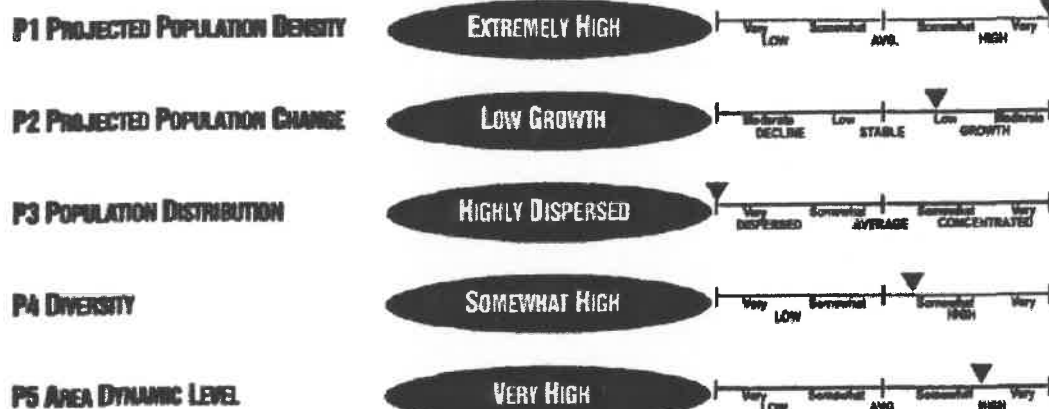
Prepared For:
 Percept
 Zip Code 10461
 Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

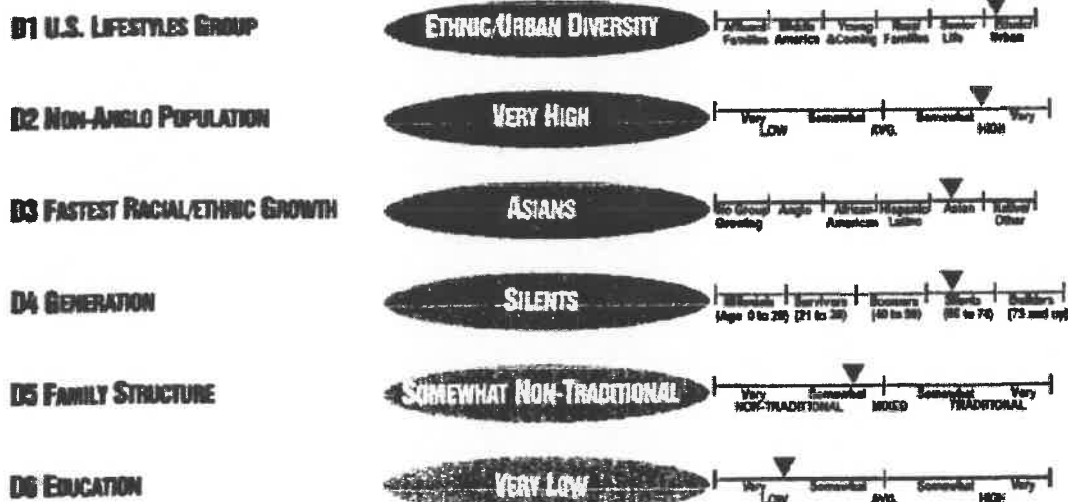
Study Area Definition:
 Zip Code 10461

Percept

People and Place



Faces of Diversity



View 2002
Questionnaire

Prepared For:
 Percept
 Zip Code 10461
 Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

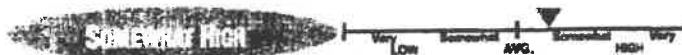
Study Area Definition:
 Zip Code 10461

Percept

C1 PRIMARY CONCERNS



C2 RISC LEVEL (Stress Conditions)



C3 POTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO CHANGE



Faith Preferences

F1 FAITH RECEPTIVITY



F2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT POTENTIAL



F3 CHURCH STYLE



F4 CHURCH PROGRAM PREFERENCE



F5 HAVE A RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE





Prepared For:
Percept
Zip Code 10461
Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
Zip Code 10461



People and Place Detail

P1: How many people live in the defined study area?

Currently, there are 50,414 persons residing in the defined study area. This represents an increase of 2,162 or 4.5% since 1990. During the same period of time, the U.S. as a whole grew by 25.4%. *See MAP page 4*

	1990 Census	1990 Census	2002 Update	2007 Projection
Study Area	48,252	46,130	50,414	51,944

P2: Is the population in this area projected to grow?

Yes, between 2002 and 2007, the population is projected to increase by 3.0% or 1,530 additional persons. During the same period, the U.S. population is projected to grow by 4.3%. *See MAP page 8*

	Actual Change From 1990 to 1999	Actual Change From 1990 to 2002	PROJECTED Change From 2002 to 2007
Study Area	-4%	9%	3%
U.S. AVERAGE	10%	14%	4%

P3: How spread out is the population in the study area?

In the study area, the top three quarters of the population resides in approximately 100% of the geographical area. In the U.S. as a whole and in the average community, the top 75% of the population resides in just 25% of the populated geographical area. In comparison, the study area population is highly dispersed within the overall area.

P4: What is the overall level of diversity in the area?

Based upon the number of different lifestyle and racial/ethnic groups in the area, the overall diversity in the study area can be described as *somewhat high*. See D1 and D2 below.

P5: How dynamic is the study area?

As the population density and overall diversity in an area increase, the environment becomes more complex and challenging. Given these factors, the study area dynamic level can be described as *very high*.

Faces of Diversity Detail

D1: How much lifestyle diversity is represented?

The lifestyle diversity in the area is *very low* with only 17 of the 50 U.S. Lifestyles segments represented. Of the six major segment groupings, the largest is referred to as *Ethnic and Urban Diversity* which accounts for 80.8% of the households in the area. The top individual segment is *Working Urban Life* representing 46.7% of all households. *See MAP pages 13 and 14*

	African Families	Middle American Families	Young and Coasting	Real Families	Senior Life	Ethnic & Urban Diversity
Study Area	< 1%	3%	5%	< 1%	1%	91%
U.S. AVERAGE	13%	34%	14%	14%	7%	18%

D2 & D3: How do racial or ethnic groups contribute to diversity in this area?

Based upon the total number of different groups present, the racial/ethnic diversity in the area is *extremely high*. Among individual groups, *Angels* represent 60.4% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up 39.6% which is somewhat above the national average of 30%. The largest of these groups, *Hispanics/Latinos*, accounts for 26.8% of the total population. *Asians* are projected to be the fastest growing group increasing by 17.4% between 2002 and 2007. *See MAP pages 1 and 9*

	Angels	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Native Am and Other
Study Area	60%	4%	27%	8%	< 1%
U.S. AVERAGE	70%	12%	13%	4%	1%

D4: What are the major generational groups represented?

The most significant group in terms of numbers and comparison to national averages is *Seniors* (age 60 to 74) who make up 14.2% of the total population in the area compared to 11.1% of the U.S. population as a whole. *See MAP page 4*

	Millennials 0 to 20	Generators 21 to 39	Boomers 40 to 59	Seniors 60 to 74	Boomers 75 & up
Study Area	22%	27%	27%	14%	11%
U.S. AVERAGE	30%	26%	27%	11%	6%



Prepared For:
Percept
Zip Code 10461
Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
Zip Code 10461



Faces of Diversity Detail (cont.)

D5: Overall, how traditional are the family structures?

The area can be described as somewhat non-traditional due to the below average presence of married persons and two-parent families. (see MAP page 8)

	Single (never married)	Divorced or Widowed	Married
Study Area	30%	21%	49%
U.S. AVERAGE	27%	18%	55%

D6: How educated are the adults?

Based upon the number of years completed and college enrollment, the overall education level in the area is very low. While 65.7% of the population aged 25 and over have graduated from high school as compared to the national average of 75.2%, college graduates account for 15.4% of those over 25 in the area versus 20.3% in the U.S. (see MAP page 9)

	Single Mothers	Single Fathers	Married Couples
Study Area	21%	4%	75%
U.S. AVERAGE	21%	5%	73%

	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College Graduate	Post Graduate
Study Area	34%	35%	14%	5%	7%
U.S. AVERAGE	25%	30%	25%	13%	7%

Formative Survey Data

C1: Which household concerns are unusually high in the area?

Concerns which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Affordable Housing, Racial/Ethnic Prejudice, Social Injustice, Adequate Food, Finding Companionship and Employment Opportunities*. As an overall category, concerns related to *The Basics* are the most significant based upon the total number of households and comparison to national averages. (see MAP page 16)

	The Basics	Family Problems	Community Problems	Hopes and Dreams	Spiritual Personal
Study Area	30%	18%	16%	28%	14%
U.S. AVERAGE	24%	11%	16%	30%	15%

C2: What is the overall community stress level in the area?

Conditions which can contribute to placing an area at risk (particularly, the children) are at an overall somewhat high level. This is evidenced by noting that on the whole the area is somewhat above average in the characteristics known to contribute to community problems such as households below poverty line, adults without a high school diploma, households with a single mother and unusually high concern about issues such as community problems, family problems, and/or basic necessities such as food, housing and jobs. (see MAP pages 1, 6, 8, 9 and 10)

	Households Below Poverty (\$14,400)	House- holds with Children: Single Mothers	Adult Pop.: High School Dropouts	Primary Concern: The Basics	Primary Concern: Family Problems	Primary Concern: Community Problems
Study Area	21%	21%	34%	38%	18%	16%
U.S. AVERAGE	14%	21%	25%	24%	17%	16%

C3: How much overall resistance to change is likely in the area?

Based upon the assumption that as a group of people become older and more diverse the potential for resistance to change becomes more significant, the area's potential resistance is likely to be somewhat high. (see MAP pages 14, 15-16)

	Population By Age and Diversity	Average Age	Overall Lifestyle and Racial/Ethnic Diversity
Study Area		41.3	6
U.S. AVERAGE		38.7	5



Prepared For:
Percept
Zip Code 10461
Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
Zip Code 10461



Faith Preferences Detail

F1: What is the likely faith receptivity?

Overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is *somewhat low* when compared to national averages. (see MAP page 10)

	Not Involved	Somewhat Involved	Strongly Involved
Study Area	42%	34%	25%
U.S. AVERAGE	37%	30%	33%

F2: What is the likely giving potential in the area?

Based upon the average household income of \$48,925 per year and the likely contribution behavior in the area, the overall religious giving potential can be described as *extremely low*. (see MAP pages 4 and 13)

	Average Annual Household Income	Households Contributing More Than \$500 per Year to Churches
Study Area	\$48,925	24%
U.S. AVERAGE	\$61,504	31%

F3: Do households prefer an overall church style which is more traditional or contemporary?

Based upon likely worship, music and architectural style preferences in the area, the overall church style preference can be described as *very traditional*. (see COMPASS pages 3 and 6)

	Worship: Traditional	Music: Traditional	Arch: Historic Traditional	Worship: Contemporary	Music: Contemporary	Arch: Historic Contemporary
Study Area	21%	25%	28%	22%	18%	14%
U.S. AVERAGE	26%	24%	27%	26%	23%	18%

F4: Which general church programs or services are most likely to be preferred in the area?

Church program preferences which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Food Pantry/Clothing Resources, Care for the Terminally Ill, Twelve-Step Programs and Cultural Programs (Music, Art, etc.)*. As an overall category, programs related to *Community/Social Services* are the most significant based upon total number of households and comparison to national averages. (see COMPASS page 8)

	Spiritual Development	Personal Development	Community/Social Services	Recreation
Study Area	18%	8%	28%	42%
U.S. AVERAGE	25%	10%	20%	36%

F5: How likely are people to have some religious preferences?

In the study area, 85.5% of the households are likely to express a preference for some particular religious tradition or affiliation, about the same as the national average of 85.0%. (see MAP page 15)

	No Preference	Non-"Mainline Christian" Groups	"Mainline Christian" Groups
Study Area	15%	14%	71%
U.S. AVERAGE	15%	8%	77%

View 2002
Localview Concepts 2002, Inc.

Prepared For:
Percept
 Zip Code 10462
 Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
 Zip Code 10462

Percept

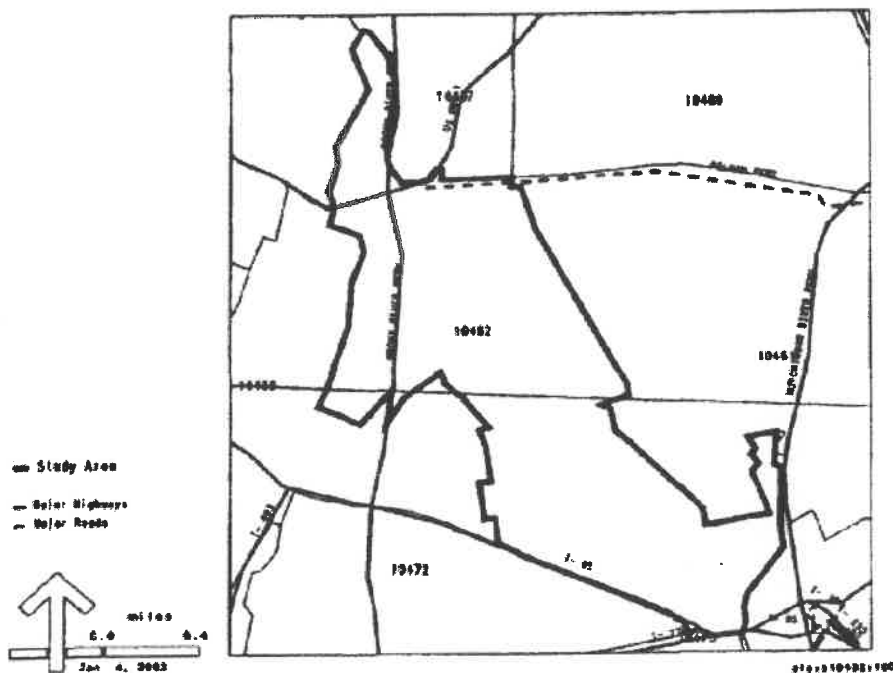
People and Place ... pgs 2 & 4

... pgs 3 & 5

... pgs 2 & 4

Faith Preferences ... pgs 3 & 6

Study Area with Zip Codes





About the people in
10462 - Bronx, NY

BASED ON 2000 CENSUS DATA

	10462	U.S.
1 Current Population	72,120	284 mil.
2 Projected 5 Year Population Change	5.3%	4.3%
3 Largest Lifestyles Group	Ethnic & Urban Diversity	Middle American Families
4 Non-Anglo Population	77%	30%
5 Fastest Growing Racial/Ethnic Group*	African- Americans	Asians
6 Households with No Faith Involvement	39%	35%
7 Average Age	40.0	36.7
8 Average Household Income	\$44,645	\$61,904
9 Single Parent Households	39%	26%
10 College Graduates	15%	20%



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Sources: Percept, Claritas/NDS, Census Bureau (v01b1) * group must be at least 0.5%

View 2002
based on Census 2000 data

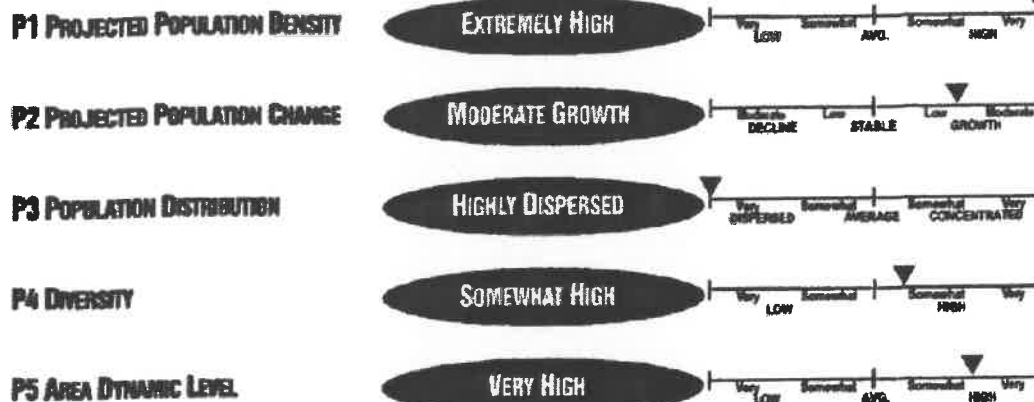
Prepared For:
Percept
 Zip Code 10462
 Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

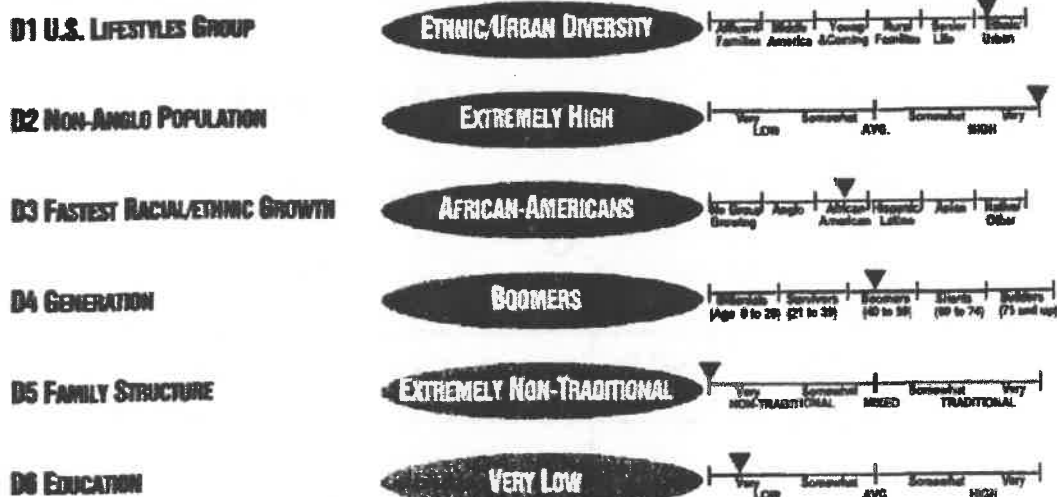
Study Area Definition:
 Zip Code 10462



People and Place



Faces of Diversity



View 2002
Countdown to 2002 data

Prepared For:
Percept
 Zip Code 10462
 Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
 Zip Code 10462

Percept

C1 PRIMARY CONCERNS

THE BASICS



C2 RISC LEVEL (Stress Conditions)

VERY HIGH



C3 POTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

SOMEWHAT HIGH



Faith Preferences

F1 FAITH RECEPTIVITY

SOMEWHAT LOW



F2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT POTENTIAL

VERY LOW



F3 CHURCH STYLE

VERY TRADITIONAL



F4 CHURCH PROGRAM PREFERENCE

RECREATION



F5 HAVE A RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

AVERAGE





Prepared For:
Percept
Zip Code 10462
Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
Zip Code 10462



People and Place Detail

P1: How many people live in the defined study area?

Currently, there are 72,120 persons residing in the defined study area. This represents an increase of 8,828 or 13.9% since 1990. During the same period of time, the U.S. as a whole grew by 25.4%. (see MAP page 4)

	1990 Census	1990 Census	2002 Update	2007 Projection
Study Area	63,292	61,272	72,120	75,944

P2: Is the population in this area projected to grow?

Yes, between 2002 and 2007, the population is projected to increase by 5.3% or 3,824 additional persons. During the same period, the U.S. population is projected to grow by 4.3%. (see MAP page 4)

	Actual Change From 1990 to 1999	Actual Change From 1990 to 2002	PROJECTED Change From 2002 to 2007
Study Area	-3%	15%	5%
U.S. AVERAGE	10%	14%	4%

P3: How spread out is the population in the study area?

In the study area, the top three quarters of the population resides in approximately 100% of the geographical area. In the U.S. as a whole and in the average community, the top 75% of the population resides in just 25% of the populated geographical area. In comparison, the study area population is highly dispersed within the overall area.

P4: What is the overall level of diversity in the area?

Based upon the number of different lifestyle and racial/ethnic groups in the area, the overall diversity in the study area can be described as *somewhat high*. See D1 and D2 below.

P5: How dynamic is the study area?

As the population density and overall diversity in an area increase, the environment becomes more complex and challenging. Given these factors, the study area dynamic level can be described as *very high*.

Faces of Diversity Detail

D1: How much lifestyle diversity is represented?

The lifestyle diversity in the area is *very low* with only 12 of the 50 U.S. Lifestyles segments represented. Of the six major segment groupings, the largest is referred to as *Ethnic and Urban Diversity* which accounts for 97.9% of the households in the area. The top individual segment is *Working Diverse Urbanites* representing 84.1% of all households. (see MAP pages 12 and 14)

	African Families	White American Families	Young and Coming	Fixed Families	Senior Life	Ethnic & Urban Diversity
Study Area	< 1%	1%	< 1%	1%	< 1%	98%
U.S. AVERAGE	13%	39%	14%	14%	7%	16%

D2 & D3: How do racial or ethnic groups contribute to diversity in this area?

Based upon the total number of different groups present, the racial/ethnic diversity in the area is *extremely high*. Among individual groups, *Anglos* represent 23.1% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up a substantial 76.9% which is well above the national average of 30%. The largest of these groups, *Hispanics/Latinos*, accounts for 42.1% of the total population. *African-Americans* are projected to be the fastest growing group increasing by 12.8% between 2002 and 2007. (see MAP pages 6 and 7)

	Anglo	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Native Am. and Other
Study Area	23%	28%	42%	8%	1%
U.S. AVERAGE	70%	12%	13%	4%	1%

D4: What are the major generational groups represented?

The most significant group in terms of numbers and comparison to national averages is *Boomers* (age 40 to 59) who make up 27.2% of the total population in the area compared to 27.0% of the U.S. population as a whole. (see MAP page 8)

	Millennials 0 to 29	Generation X 30 to 39	Boomers 40 to 59	Silents 60 to 74	Babblers 75 & up
Study Area	23%	26%	27%	12%	10%
U.S. AVERAGE	30%	26%	27%	11%	6%



Prepared For:
Percept
Zip Code 10462
Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
Zip Code 10462



Faces of Diversity Detail (cont.)

B5: Overall, how traditional are the family structures?

The area can be described as *extremely non-traditional* due to the below average presence of married persons and two-parent families. (see MAP page 4)

	Single (never married)	Divorced or Widowed	Married
Study Area	31%	24%	45%
U.S. Average	27%	10%	55%

D6: How educated are the adults?

Based upon the number of years completed and college enrollment, the overall education level in the area is *very low*. While 67.3% of the population aged 25 and over have graduated from high school as compared to the national average of 75.2%, college graduates account for 15.1% of those over 25 in the area versus 20.3% in the U.S. (see MAP page 8)

	Single Mothers	Single Fathers	Married Couples
Study Area	32%	7%	60%
U.S. Average	21%	5%	73%

	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College Graduate	Post Graduate
Study Area	33%	32%	20%	10%	6%
U.S. Average	25%	30%	21%	15%	7%

E1: Which household concerns are unusually high in the area?

Concerns which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Affordable Housing, Racial/Ethnic Prejudice, Social Injustice, Adequate Food, Employment Opportunities and Finding Companionship*. As an overall category, concerns related to *The Basics* are the most significant based upon the total number of households and comparison to national averages. (see MAP page 10)

	The Basics	Family Problems	Community Problems	Hopes and Dreams	Spiritual/Personal
Study Area	28%	9%	18%	26%	14%
U.S. Average	26%	17%	16%	30%	10%

E2: What is the overall community stress level in the area?

Conditions which can contribute to placing an area at risk (particularly, the children) are at an overall *very high* level. This is evidenced by noting that on the whole the area is significantly above average in the characteristics known to contribute to community problems such as households below poverty line, adults without a high school diploma, households with a single mother and unusually high concern about issues such as community problems, family problems, and/or basic necessities such as food, housing and jobs. (see MAP pages 11, 12 and 14)

	Households Below Poverty (\$15,000)	Households with Children: Single Mothers	Adult Pop.: High School Dropouts	Primary Concern: The Basics	Primary Concern: Family Problems	Primary Concern: Community Problems
Study Area	22%	32%	33%	29%	9%	18%
U.S. Average	14%	21%	26%	34%	17%	16%

E3: How much overall resistance to change is likely in the area?

Based upon the assumption that as a group of people become older and more diverse the potential for resistance to change becomes more significant, the area's potential resistance is likely to be *somewhat high*. (see MAP pages 4-6, 12-14)

	Population by Age and Diversity	Average Age	Overall Lifestyle and Racial/Ethnic Diversity
Study Area		40.0	6
U.S. Average		36.7	5



Prepared For:
Percept
Zip Code 10462
Bronx, NY

Date Prepared: January 4, 2002

Study Area Definition:
Zip Code 10462



Faith Preferences Detail

F1: What is the likely faith receptivity?

Overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is somewhat low when compared to national averages. (see MAP page 12)

	Not Involved	Somewhat Involved	Strongly Involved
Study Area	39%	35%	26%
U.S. AVERAGE	30%	30%	39%

F2: What is the likely giving potential in the area?

Based upon the average household income of \$44,645 per year and the likely contribution behavior in the area, the overall religious giving potential can be described as very low. (see MAP pages 4 and 17)

	Average Annual Household Income	Households Contributing More Than \$200 per Year to Churches
Study Area	\$44,645	27%
U.S. AVERAGE	\$61,986	31%

F3: Do households prefer an overall church style which is more traditional or contemporary?

Based upon likely worship, music and architectural style preferences in the area, the overall church style preference can be described as very traditional. (see COMPASS pages 3 and 6)

	Worship: Traditional	Music: Traditional	Architectural: Traditional	Worship: Contemporary	Music: Contemporary	Architectural: Contemporary
Study Area	23%	28%	28%	20%	14%	13%
U.S. AVERAGE	20%	24%	27%	26%	20%	16%

F4: Which general church programs or services are most likely to be preferred in the area?

Church program preferences which are likely to exceed the national average include: Twelve-Step Programs, Cultural Programs (Music, Art, etc.), Care for the Terminally Ill and Food Pantry/Clothing Resources. As an overall category, programs related to Recreation are the most significant based upon total number of households and comparison to national averages. (see COMPASS page 2)

	Spiritual Development	Personal Development	Community/Social Services	Recreation
Study Area	16%	7%	27%	43%
U.S. AVERAGE	25%	10%	20%	36%

F5: How likely are people to have some religious preferences?

In the study area, 85.5% of the households are likely to express a preference for some particular religious tradition or affiliation, about the same as the national average of 85.0%. (see MAP page 16)

	No Preference	Non-"Mainline Christian" Groups	"Mainline Christian" Groups
Study Area	15%	16%	69%
U.S. AVERAGE	15%	8%	77%

GLOSSARY

Acculturation – The integration of aspects of mainstream culture into one's cultural identity, family relationship, ethnic community life, or cross-cultural interactions

Culture – Refers to shared values and concepts among people who most often speak the same language and live in proximity to each other. These values and concepts are transmitted for generations, and they provide guidance for everyday behaviors.¹

Culture shock – A common reaction of one who is learning a new culture and language. Responses include irritability, confusion, hostility, estrangement and panic.

Discrimination – Treatment that favors one person or group over another.

Ethnocentricity – The belief that our cultural values and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious, are the best and that we possess the superior culture. In our separateness, we build our towers with our unspoken assumptions, values, and beliefs.

Pluralism – A condition in which members of diverse cultural groups (a) have equal access to the resources needed for realizing their full potential; (b) obtain equal social and economic benefits; (c) have equal rights to express and nurture their cultural and linguistic heritage; and (d) are supported by official policies that express value for the diversity they contribute to the society.

Prejudice – An opinion formed without enough knowledge or thought; biased about someone or something.

Racism – Unfair behavior whereby one race has and uses power over another. (*Note: there is no established agreement on any scientific definition of race. Race has no biological or natural basis, but is rather a socially defined construct that is used to categorize people according to the color of their skin*).

Stereotype – A generalization or oversimplification about a whole group of people.

¹ Richard Brislin, *Understanding Culture's Influence on Behavior, Second Edition* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt College Publisher, 2000).

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